

Gift-giving, consumption and the female court in sixteenth-century Italy

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**Gift-Giving, Consumption and the Female Court
in Sixteenth-Century Italy**

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Queen Mary College, University of London

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Queen Mary College, University of London
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The subject of my research is the female consort and her court. I focus on three Austrian Archduchesses: Giovanna, Barbara and Eleonora Habsburg who came down to Italy in the second half of the sixteenth century and married into the ducal houses of Florence, Ferrara and Mantua respectively. My thesis compares the structures, roles and relationships in these three contemporary female courts, and analyses the consorts' reliance on personal consumption, gift-giving and patronage activities to assert their power, position and identity. My research is primarily based on the unpublished letters and accounts preserved in the three state archives of Florence, Modena (which contains the Este archive) and Mantua.

My thesis starts with a background chapter on the history of the three Duchesses, and then turns to address each Duchess's financial situation, the organisation of her court, her attitude to her husband and her new family and the particular circumstances of her life. This chapter sheds new light on the position of the consort, and sets the stage for the exploration of her patronage and consumption. My first case-study focuses on clothing. I examine the Duchesses' choices in dressing themselves and their courts and analyse their treatment of clothing as a valuable visual language. My second case-study focuses on the gifts of food that were sent to and from the Duchesses. I discuss their function as items of relatively small economic value in the creation of patronage relationships and in the process of social and political mediation.

The central tenet in my case-studies is that objects could act as coded messages, with multiple meanings which can be dissected by studying owner, receiver, means of transmission and the type of object itself. My approach employs material culture as a means for enriching current knowledge of a particularly under-researched subject: the female consort.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or different form, to this or any other University for a degree.

Signature:.....

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Money, Weights and Measures

Florence:

1 *scudo d'oro* = approx. 7.10 *lire*

1 *scudo di moneta* = approx. 7 *lire*

1 *ducato* = approx. 7 *lire*

1 *lire* = 20 *soldi*

1 *soldo* = 12 *denari*

The *Guardaroba* accounts use both *scudi* and *ducati*. Often a sign is employed and appears to be used interchangeably for both *scudi* and *ducati*. When this is the case, I have used the symbol ▼ to indicate the sign.

Ferrara and Mantua:

The financial records I examine use money of account, a system based on *lire*, *soldi* and *denari*:

1 *lire* = 20 *soldi* = 240 *denari*¹

1 *uncia* = 27 grams

1 *braccio* = 0.58 metres

¹ See Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn S. Welch, *The Material Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. xx-xxiii.

Abbreviations

ASF = Archivio di Stato di Firenze

MdP = Mediceo del Principato

GM = *Guardaroba* Medicea

MM = Miscellanea Medicea

ASM = Archivio di Stato di Mantova

AG = Archivio Gonzaga

ASMo = Archivio di Stato di Modena

ASE = Archivio Segreto Estense

Nota bene: in my transcriptions from the archival sources all original spellings have been maintained; abbreviations have been expanded where known; the punctuation has been modernised.

Introduction

He who does not give what he has, will not get what he wants.¹

This thesis focuses on the female consort, her court, her possessions and their use. It compares the structures, roles and relationships in three sixteenth-century female courts in Italy, analysing the consorts' reliance on personal consumption, gift-giving and patronage activities to assert their connections, rank and identity.² It suggests a socio-political context where the male ruler drew his authority from his designation as sovereign, while the female consort was forced to rely on a variety of shifting, less formal factors to exert influence. As a consequence, although closely connected, the heads of the two courts wielded power and patronage in ways that were asymmetrical. This meant that the experience of the female consort could vary widely, both from court to court and even over a single lifespan.

A considerable amount of work has been done on the ways in which women might access power, dating back to Joan Kelly's assertion that women in the Renaissance lost a great deal of their influence as authority became increasingly institutionalised and bureaucratised, excluding women who did not have a strong public role.³ However, while there has been significant interest in charting the position of

¹ Henry III of England had this motto inscribed on the walls of his palace and the borders of his chess-board. See Suzanne B. Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de' Medici (1549-1609)', *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, 11 (2007), 243-354, (p. 302). The game of chess was seen as an allegory of good government, so it is not surprising that Henry III had this motto displayed on his chess-board; see Dagoberto Markl, 'Le duc, les échecs et la métaphore du bon gouvernement', *Ludica*, 5-6 (2000), 53-59. As Suzie Butters points out, the two chief duties of a ruler were to confer benefits and dispense justice. This thesis examines this motto from the point of view of the female consort, her role and her duties.

² By consumption I mean the acquisition of material goods by the Duchesses. I am particularly concerned with the Duchesses' attempts to make such consumption visible; however, unlike Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption which focusses on the display of material wealth, I will also be addressing the subtler symbolic meanings that consumption can convey.

³ Joan Kelly, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?', in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 21-47.

queens and consorts in the Middle Ages and the ways in which their access to influence shifted and changed, only recently has scholarly attention begun to focus on the activities of such women in the early modern period.⁴ Merry Wiesner has highlighted the need to broaden the field of political history to include informal as well as formal power relationships and stressed female access to unofficial influence.⁵ In Italy a substantial body of work is currently being undertaken on the activities of aristocratic women in both formal and informal settings. Alessandra Contini and Anna Scattigno have published a compendium of women's writing, highlighting the extent of women's involvement in seemingly male-dominated operations, from negotiations to obtain military aid to marriage strategies.⁶ The correspondence and archival documents belonging to the Medici family have proved particularly fruitful for this research. The proceedings of an impressive international conference held in Florence in October 2005 were published in 2008, discussing the roles and activities both of women who joined the Medici court as foreign brides and those, like Maria de' Medici, who travelled themselves to foreign courts.⁷ In 2006, Gabrielle Langdon also published her work examining the portraits of Medici women at the court of Cosimo I, basing her analyses of the subjects of these portraits on a wealth of original archival research.⁸ Langdon was able to uncover valuable new information on some of the lesser-known female members

⁴ There has been considerable interest on the part of scholars in the position of queens and consorts in the Middle Ages. For example, John Parsons charts the gradual decline in the English queens' access to direct power, alongside a corresponding strengthening of their role as mediators and intercessory agents with their husbands from the twelfth to the fourteenth century. John Carmi Parsons, 'The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England', in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. by Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 147-77. See also, in the same volume: Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen', in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, ed. by Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 126-46. Both these authors mention the use of gifts alongside letters requesting patronage or intercession, but neither go into any depth of analysis of their deployment, function and symbolism.

⁵ Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 276-78.

⁶ Georgia Arrivo points out that Bianca Cappello, as Grand Duchess, arranged the strategically important marriages of Virginia de' Medici to Cesare d'Este, Duke of Modena, and of Eleonora de' Medici to Vincenzo Gonzaga. She also argues that Giovanna d'Austria played a key role in the negotiations between the Emperor and the Medici over the procurement of arms and men to quell the revolt in Finale. Georgia Arrivo, 'Una dinastia al femminile. Per uno sguardo diverso sulla storia politico-istituzionale', in *Carte di donne: per un censimento regionale della scrittura delle donne dal XVI al XX secolo*, ed. by Anna Scattigno and Alessandra Contini (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007), pp. 49-58 (pp. 54-55).

⁷ *Le donne Medici nel sistema europeo delle corti: XVI-XVIII secolo*, ed. by Giulia Calvi and Riccardo Spinelli (Florence: Polistampa, 2008). Volume I includes a contribution by Maria Fubini Leuzzi on the Archduchess Giovanna that highlights her political engagement: 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze fra etichetta e impegno politico: Giovanna d'Austria', pp. 233-56.

⁸ Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal from the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

of the Medici family. The success of her approach highlights the importance of exploring multiple sources in order to achieve a greater understanding of the lives of women at court. There has also been an increase in focussed studies of different female members of the Medici dynasty such as Caroline Murphy's vivid life of Isabella de' Medici, which was published in 2008, and Vanni Bramanti's *Breve Vita di Leonora di Toledo* which appeared the previous year.⁹ Nevertheless, the overall focus has remained resolutely on either women who had occasion to wield power directly as regents, such as the Queen of France, Caterina de' Medici, and the Medici Granduchesses of Tuscany, Maria Maddalena d'Austria and Cristina di Lorena, or on those who were highly successful in controlling and administering their patronage, such as the Duchess of Florence, Eleonora di Toledo, and the Duchess of Ferrara, Lucrezia Borgia.¹⁰ My own research instead focuses on women who faced greater restrictions on their freedom of action.¹¹ I aim to examine a category of women – female consorts – who usually enjoyed little access to direct power and had to work through indirect means. By providing a comparative analysis of three courts linked by time, by geography, by similar systems of government as well as by familial ties, I chart some of the ways in which the female consort could act independently and influentially.

In my analysis I investigate the factors that could either impede or enable the early modern female consort's access to authority and the avenues that allowed for influence. I argue that the consorts' differing situations at court were reflected in their use of gift-giving and consumption and the extent to which they relied on these alternative and indirect means of expressing their wishes and strengthening their

⁹ Caroline Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici: The Glorious Life and Tragic End of a Renaissance Princess* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), and Vanni Bramanti, *Breve vita di Leonora di Toledo, 1555-1576* (Florence: Le lettere, 2007).

¹⁰ See for example Fanny Cosandey, 'Les régence de Catherine et Marie de Médicis: un héritage italien?', in *Le donne Medici*, ed. by Giulia Calvi and Riccardo Spinelli, vol. I, pp. 345-360; Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, 'Lucrezia Borgia as Entrepreneur', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 61.1 (2008), 53-91; *The Cultural World of Eleonora di Toledo, Duchess of Florence and Siena*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Giuseppe Vittorio Parigino, *Il tesoro del principe: funzione pubblica e privata del patrimonio della famiglia Medici nel Cinquecento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1999).

¹¹ Some illuminating work has been done on the problems female consorts might face in attempting to wield power or assert their own political or religious views, such as Evelyn Welch's examination of Bianca Sforza, Duchess of Milan or Rosanna Gorris' analysis of the court of Renée of France, but much research remains to be done. Evelyn Welch, 'Women as Patrons and Clients in the Courts of Quattrocento Italy', in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. by Letizia Panizza (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), pp. 18-34. See also Evelyn Welch, 'Between Milan and Naples: Ippolita Maria Sforza, Duchess of Calabria', in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy 1494-95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. by David Abulafia (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), pp. 123-36; Rosanna Gorris, 'D'un chateau à l'autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara (1528-1560)', in *Il palazzo di Renata di Francia*, ed. by Loredana Olivato (Ferrara: Corbo, 1997), pp. 139-73.

position. To do this, my work focuses on three sisters, the daughters of the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand I, who married into the courts of Florence, Mantua and Ferrara in the second half of the sixteenth century. My examination of these three women, united by upbringing and cultural background, provides a useful way of comparing the experiences of female consorts and the many factors that could affect their position and activities during their marriages.

My research builds on recent literature on the court which has tended to concentrate on the principal, male arena of power, rather than on the satellite female courts. Sergio Bertelli, Franco Cardini and Elvira Garbero Zorzi have worked on various aspects of the Gonzaga court in Mantua, the Medici court in Florence, and that of the Montefeltro dukes in Urbino.¹² Marcello Fantoni has published extensively on the Florentine court,¹³ while Guido Guerzoni has worked on both the Gonzaga and the Este courts.¹⁴ Many of these works focus on the relationships established between courtier and *seigneur*, and the processes through which this bond was initiated, fostered and maintained. While Bertelli and Guerzoni have also discussed the female court, they have tended to argue that this merely replicated that of the ruling consort. In their view, the spouse's court was only distinctive because of its reduced format, including only those courtly offices that pertained to the administration of sectors within the palace doors.¹⁵

Despite this focus on the male court, however, recent years have seen the growing importance of a complementary strand of research that concentrates on the analysis of the roles played by members of the female court. This can be seen, for example, in Sharon Kettering's work on women in aristocratic households in early

¹² *Le corti italiane del Rinascimento*, ed. by Sergio Bertelli, Cardini, Franco, Garbero Zorzi, Elvira (Milan: Mondadori, 1985).

¹³ Marcello Fantoni, *La corte del granduca: forme e simboli del potere mediceo fra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1994).

¹⁴ Guido Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna: struttura, ordini e funzioni', in *I Gonzaga: moneta, arte, storia*, ed. by Silvana Balbi de Caro (Milan: Electa, 1995), pp. 90-96. Guido Guerzoni and Guido Alfani, 'Court History and Career Analysis: A Prosopographic Approach to the Court of Renaissance Ferrara', *The Court Historian*, 12.1 (2007), 1-34. Trevor Dean has also written on the household of the Este court in Ferrara: Trevor Dean, 'Court and Household in Ferrara, 1494', in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494-95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. by David Abulafia (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), pp. 165-87.

¹⁵ 'Le corti satelliti della *domina* e dell'erede al potere ripetono il modello primario del signore, seppure in forma ridotta, e limitatamente alle sole cariche del palazzo': Sergio Bertelli, 'L'universo cortigiano', in *Le corti italiane del Rinascimento*, ed. by Sergio Bertelli, Cardini, Franco, Garbero Zorzi, Elvira (Milan: Mondadori, 1985), pp. 7-37 (p. 27); Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna' (p. 90). See also Guerzoni and Alfani, 'Court History and Career Analysis', (pp. 11-12).

modern France,¹⁶ and it has also taken on increasing importance in particular fields, for example the history of medicine, where Sandra Cavallo's recent work on the court in Turin discusses the female court and its inhabitants in relation to ideas about the body and its care.¹⁷ Further work is also being done on the court in the Habsburg empire, including Katrin Keller's work on female courtiers in seventeenth-century Vienna.¹⁸ My own approach builds on this growing interest by concentrating on the activities, role and position of the head of the female court, and the extent of her control over her entourage, rather than analysing the careers of individual courtiers.

My aim is to approach this study from an interdisciplinary angle. I employ material culture as a means through which to explore the position of the female consort and the roles she could play on both a local and an international level. My focus on the factors that could affect the female consort's position and control over both her own courtiers and over other figures at court and outside serves as the essential background for the second part of my thesis. Here I examine the consort's consumption and gift-giving as strategies through which she might overcome the limitations imposed upon her role, sustain her position and exert influence by unofficial and alternative means.

While male rulers enjoyed access to material culture as one amongst many resources at their disposal to highlight their position and identity, and to extend their power over others, for women objects, and only certain types of object, were often the only means under their direct and undisputed control. The restrictions placed upon noblewomen's freedom of operation is exemplified by their increasing exclusion from the governmental bureaucracy that started to develop in the late Middle Ages.¹⁹ Furthermore, they enjoyed relatively limited access to active participation within the growing market economy. Given these twin factors, I argue that while material culture and its deployment is of great importance for the historical analysis of early modern

¹⁶ For a collection of her articles, see Sharon Kettering, *Patronage in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

¹⁷ Sandra Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body in Early Modern Italy: Identities, Families and Masculinities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Katrin Keller, *Hofdamen: Amtsträgerinnen im Wiener Hofstaat des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2005).

¹⁹ Medieval historians have argued that bureaucratic networks overtook gift-exchange as the main means of cementing authority and creating social consensus. Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld, 'The Medieval Gift as Agent of Social Bonding and Political Power: A Comparative Approach', in *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power and Gifts in Context*, ed. by Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 123-56 (p. 151). It is important, however, to remember that gifts were still extensively employed in administration and were perceived as a vital part of successful bureaucratic rule, see Valentin Groebner, *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

rulers and noblemen,²⁰ it is even more vital in assessing noblewomen's capacity to exercise power and manoeuvre within society. Their access to other avenues of activity was comparatively limited, and they relied on relationships, fostered and maintained through the exchange of objects, in order to exercise influence. If we then look at the particular position of the female consort, my research will demonstrate that the analysis of gift-giving assumes the greatest importance as, on top of the potential restrictions imposed upon noblewomen, they were also faced with the responsibility of governing courts of their own and relied on gift-giving as one of the main means of maintaining the loyalty and cooperation of their courtiers.

As I have highlighted above, given the consort's limited access to formal means of wielding direct power, my aim is to explore the avenues which allowed her to access influence more indirectly. I focus on the different networks of relationships she was able to construct and exploit, both at court and outside, and the gift-giving strategies she adopted in order to do so. As a consequence, the relationship networks I analyse naturally fall into a number of different categories, ranging from clientage to friendship. These categories, however, as Bill Kent has highlighted, are closely interrelated in the early modern period and it is this interrelation that has led me to gather a number of them together under the umbrella of *patronage*.²¹ In so doing I employ the term of patronage in its broadest meaning: I view patronage as a concept which can encompass all relationships characterised by the creation of a situation of asymmetrical but mutual benefits, and fostered by the ongoing exchange of gifts, whether of material objects or favours, loyalty and support. Many studies of patronage have adopted a similar definition, but the focus has generally been on relationships where the asymmetry between patron and client is greater.²² My own work moves beyond this to include relationships where the difference in rank and status is less apparent and where personal feelings of friendship, affection and memory may operate alongside more practical and calculated interests. Thus I go beyond the limits of artistic, religious or political patronage in my definition of the practice. For example, I include under the term 'patronage', relationships characterised by the provision of items such as clothing and

²⁰ See, for example, Suzanne B. Butter's recent article on the gift-giving activities of Ferdinando de' Medici both as a Cardinal and as Grand Duke: Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts'.

²¹ On early modern patronage focussing on Italy, and especially on Florence, see *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by F.W. Kent, P. Simons, J.C. Eade (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

²² Ibid. See also Dennis Romano, 'Aspects of Patronage in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Venice', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 46, 4 (1993), 712-733.

textiles to ladies-in-waiting, evident in the Archduchesses' wills, in their accounts, and given in connection with the marriages they had arranged.²³ Such provisions of clothing have been discussed from the perspective of duty and remuneration, for example in the master-servant relationship outlined by Dennis Romano, or in relation to their function as objects able to communicate esteem and affection, as Sandra Cavallo points out in her article on the female transmission of objects. However, the relationships demarcated by the exchange of these objects can be understood, precisely because of the fluid boundaries between clientage and friendship, and because of the lack of clearly established contracts in early modern service, as also entering into the realm of patronage relationships without, however, invalidating other meanings and connotations they may hold.²⁴

The fluidity of the boundaries between the male and the female court, and the mutability of the position of the female consort are key issues in my thesis and this has influenced my approach to patronage. I would argue that in the case of the female consort it is helpful to adopt a broader definition of patronage because of the vulnerability of her position at court. She relied on creating and maintaining networks of relationships in order to wield influence and sustain her position and identity, and as a consequence there was always an element of strategy in the relationships she constructed and in her fostering and publicising of them through the circulation of objects. However, this is not to say that her actions were entirely premised on perceived tactical advantages: I would also assert that the relationships she constructed were multi-layered and complex and the objects that she gave and received could hold multiple and often overlapping meanings. My aim is not to bring together into an indivisible mass relationships which were evidently extremely diverse; rather, I wish to bring together and analyse relationships that have traditionally been kept separate, such as political, religious and economic patronage, and to broaden the definition of the term in order to build up a more complete and detailed vision of how women might operate as consorts. My aim is to dissect and compare the different ways in which the female

²³ On the artistic patronage of Eleonora di Toledo, for example, see Bruce Edelstein, 'Nobildonne napoletane e committenza: Eleonora d'Aragona e Eleonora di Toledo a confronto', *Quaderni Storici*, 2 (2000), 295-330, and indeed the whole issue on female artistic patronage in Italy.

²⁴ Sandra Cavallo, 'What did Women Transmit? Ownership and Control of Household Goods and Personal Effects in Early Modern Italy', in *Gender and Material Culture in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 38-53. Dennis Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400-1600* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

consort might create and sustain networks and make herself visible at court and outside, the difficulties she might face and the methods she could employ. In order to analyse the development and significance of these relationships I have focussed on the consumption and exchange of the objects that rendered these networks of contacts visible and it is to a discussion of material culture that I shall now turn.

Material Culture and its Meanings

Evidence of the objects that the three Habsburg Archduchesses circulated is contained in receipts and account books, as well as in letters and ambassadorial reports.²⁵ Rather than attempting to reconstruct what they owned and identify surviving objects, I have approached the data contained in these documents from the perspective of a cultural historian. I argue that the objects that were exchanged were given particular significance by sender, recipient and witnessing public or intermediaries, such as ambassadors, and I discuss how such objects might facilitate and strengthen relationships. Gift-exchange has long been subject to discussion within the field of anthropology, from the time of Marcel Mauss and his *Essai sur le don*²⁶ and it has increasingly been examined within the field of history.²⁷ However, while there has already been a great deal of work on gift-giving by medieval historians, it has only recently been subjected to concerted study by historians of the early modern period.²⁸ The main historical text on early modern gift-exchange is Natalie Zemon Davis' *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*.²⁹

²⁵ I use ambassadorial reports on a number of occasions, as they provide valuable information on the daily events of court life. However, I am aware of the potential problems in employing these reports as a means of reconstructing the lives and activities of the Habsburg Archduchesses. These women are discussed from a male perspective and the authors of the reports have particular political agendas. While they provide a valuable external perspective on the Archduchesses' activities and position, I have attempted wherever possible to provide further evidence to support and augment these reports and to highlight the possibility of exaggeration or distortion.

²⁶ Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (1925).

²⁷ For a key crossover text containing contributions from both social anthropologists and historians, see *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²⁸ For a useful overview of some of the key texts relating to gift-giving in medieval Europe, see Bijsterveld, 'The Medieval Gift as Agent'.

²⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Brigitte Buettner, 'Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, c.1400', *Art Bulletin*, 83.4 (2001), 598-625; Kathleen Ashley, 'Material and Symbolic Gift Giving: Clothes in English and French Wills', in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. by E. Jane Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 137-46; Felicity Heal, 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 199.1 (2008), 41-70; Jane Fair Bestor, 'Marriage Transactions in Renaissance Italy and Mauss's Essay on the Gift', *Past and Present*, 164.1 (1999), 6-46; and Renata Ago, 'Donne, doni e public relations tra le famiglie

In her work, Davis recognises the value of material culture within historical scholarship and argues that gifts can help us to understand such issues as familial alliances or conflict, as well as economic relations, politics and religion. These are all well-established historical subjects, but Davis opens up a new vein of access to them by tracking objects and their trajectories through lists of accounts, wills, ledgers, as well as more user-friendly correspondence. In this way a particular aspect of material culture such as gift-exchange can illuminate contemporary ideas, beliefs and social and political interrelationships. Suzie Butters and Mary Hollingsworth have also examined material culture and gift-giving in the context of early-modern court culture, but while they, like Davis and also Kettering, who examines French material culture in her analysis of exchange, have included women in their discussion, no-one has yet focussed their analysis of gift-giving specifically on the female consort.³⁰ I hope to shed new light on the position and activities of the female consort through an analysis of her employment of gift-exchange and consumption.

The Habsburg Archduchesses: A Comparison of Female Experiences

The consorts I examine in this dissertation were all daughters of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I of the Austrian House of Habsburg. The two younger daughters, Barbara and Giovanna (Figures 1,2), were both married at the end of 1565, the former to Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (Figure 3), and the latter to Francesco de' Medici, Duke of Florence (Figure 4). Their elder sister, Eleonora (Figure 5), had come to Italy a few years earlier, marrying Guglielmo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua (Figure 6) in 1561. These international marriage alliances represented important achievements for the respective Italian dynasties as the brides ranked far higher than their grooms: daughters and nieces of two of the greatest monarchs in Europe.³¹ They were also addressed as 'Queens' as their mother, Anna Jagiello, had been Queen of Hungary and Bohemia.

dell'aristocrazia romana del XVII secolo', in *La donna nell'economia, secc. XIII a XVIII*, ed. by Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Le Monnier, 1990), pp. 175-83.

³⁰ Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts', Mary Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat: Money, Ambition and Housekeeping in a Renaissance Court* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2005); Sharon Kettering, 'Gift-Giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', *French History*, 2.2 (1988), 131-51. Dagmar Eichberger has discussed the gift-giving practices of Margaret of Austria, but her main focus is on her activities after she became regent: Dagmar Eichberger, 'The Culture of Gifts: A Courtly Phenomenon from a Female Perspective', in *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York and Margaret of Austria*, ed. by Dagmar Eichberger (Leuven: Brepols, 2005), pp. 286-95.

³¹ When Eleonora had married Guglielmo Gonzaga in 1561, her father Ferdinand I had been Emperor. When Barbara and Giovanna wed, their brother Maximilian II had succeeded him. The marriages were

However, despite their high rank, and their marital ties to three of the most important dynasties in Italy, all three have generally been ignored by historians. When they are mentioned, it has been almost entirely within the context of dynastic historiography. One distinguished example is the Medici biographer, Riguccio Galluzzi.³² His work was part of the contemporary vogue for chronicling the histories of the great dynasties of Italy; however, in keeping with nineteenth-century attitudes, female members of these families are allocated only a marginal role.³³ Almost a century later the situation had not changed significantly. Barbara is one of three Duchesses discussed by Alfonso Lazzari in his *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara e la corte Estense a' tempi di Torquato Tasso*, but as his title demonstrates, their lives continued to be seen through the prism of the Este family history, as their failure to bear children led to the downfall of the dynasty.³⁴ Eleonora too, has been neglected. Although she shares a chapter with her daughter-in-law, Eleonora de'Medici Gonzaga, in Anna Maria Lorenzoni and Roberto Navarrini's 1991 work *Per Mantova una vita*, she is otherwise almost totally forgotten.³⁵

My thesis will incorporate an analysis of all three Duchesses, but I will be focussing above all on the Duchess (later Grand Duchess) of Florence and using her sisters for comparative purposes.³⁶ This is primarily because of the nature of the sources. Simply put there is far more evidence for Giovanna. However, she also proves to be the most useful subject for analysis because of the particular circumstances of her life in Florence. The difficulties she faced, the confrontations that occurred between her and her husband and her own responses provide excellent scope for analysing the complex role of the female consort. She held an increasingly precarious position in

vital for the Medici, Este and Gonzaga dukes. I will go further into the motives behind the marriage negotiations in chapter one.

³² Riguccio Galluzzi, *Storia del granducato di Toscana* (Florence: Marchini, 1822), III.

³³ For a useful introduction to the development of gender history in Italy, see Raffaella Sarti, 'Donne di palazzo: mediatrici a tutto tondo', in *Donne di palazzo nelle corti europee: tracce e forme di potere dall'età moderna*, ed. by Angela Giallongo (Milan: Unicopli, 2005), pp. 213-27.

³⁴ Alfonso Lazzari, *Le tre ultime duchesse di Ferrara e la corte estense a' tempi di Torquato Tasso: saggio* (Florence: Ufficio della 'Rassegna Nazionale', 1913).

³⁵ Adele Bellù, 'Le due Eleonore del quadro della Trinità di Rubens', in *Per Mantova una vita: studi in memoria di Rita Castagna*, ed. by Anna Maria Lorenzoni and Roberto Navarrini (Mantua: Publi-Paolini, 1991), pp. 157-70.

³⁶ I have consistently referred to Giovanna and her sisters as Archduchesses, when discussing them in relation to their family of origin, and as Duchesses when in relation to their lives in Italy. Cosimo I de'Medici acquired the title of Grand Duke in 1569, but this title was hotly contested and not fully endorsed until after his death in 1574. I have therefore chosen to try and limit confusion by always referring to Giovanna as a Duchess, rather than a Grand Duchess as my evidence spans both periods and is not always arranged chronologically.

Florence and, as I will demonstrate, she made ample use of gift-giving and consumption as a means of constructing and maintaining her identity, exerting influence and strengthening her position at court.

Giovanna has been discussed in a range of literary contexts, primarily in a series of biographies and plays written about her husband Francesco's mistress, Bianca Cappello (Figure 7). The latter's story of elopement from Venice and affair with the Duke of Tuscany has drawn considerable attention from the seventeenth to the twentieth-century.³⁷ The most recent biography by Maria Luisa Mariotti Masi appeared in 1986.³⁸ She, like other, earlier, twentieth-century biographers of Bianca Cappello such as Mary Steegman and Anna Loredana Zacchia Rondinini (who wrote under the pseudonym of 'Loredana'), used the 1898 biography of Bianca Cappello by Guglielmo Enrico Saltini as her main source of information.³⁹ He was the archivist and scholar in charge of cataloguing the Florentine archive's *Archivio Mediceo del Principato*. In some points these authors paraphrase extracts from Saltini, although they often fail to reference their sources. Steegman, for example, argues that the Duchess and her Venetian rival were friends, adducing as evidence that Giovanna and Bianca frequently travelled around Florence together in the former's carriage. This allegation, although completely unreferenced, derives from the contents of a letter reported by Saltini, and later by Masi and Loredana (who also fail to provide any references) which was originally transcribed in an eighteenth-century manuscript written by a certain Baldassare Zamboni, Dean of Calvisano, on commission for the Cappello family.⁴⁰

Saltini does base much of his work on archival documentation, most of which he references; however, on occasion, he also offers completely unsupported portraits of his characters, strongly influenced by nineteenth-century values, one of which is of the Duchess Giovanna. In his words, Giovanna is described as:

³⁷ The play *Women Beware Women* by Thomas Middleton, first published in 1657, is based on the story of Bianca Cappello.

³⁸ Maria Luisa Mariotti Masi, *Bianca Cappello: una veneziana alla corte dei Medici* (Milan: Mursia, 1986). Research, as yet unpublished, is also currently being undertaken on Bianca Cappello by Jacqueline Musacchio.

³⁹ Mary Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1913). Loredana, *Bianca Cappello: patrizia veneta, granduchessa di Toscana* (Rome: Cosmopoli, 1936). Guglielmo Enrico Saltini, *Bianca Cappello e Francesco I de' Medici* (Florence: Ufficio della 'Rassegna Nazionale', 1898).

⁴⁰ See Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, pp. 86-87, Saltini, *Bianca Cappello*, pp. 125-26, Masi, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 91 and Loredana, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 40. ASF, MdP 5947/C, p. 44. Given that Saltini himself asserts that Bianca may have been insincere when she wrote to tell her cousin Andrea Cappello that she was beloved by Giovanna, there is reason to doubt that a tailor writing to the same Andrea to seek a favour was speaking the truth about Bianca's relationship too. Not to mention the fact that the original letter is not kept with the manuscript and apparently came from the Cappello family's private archives, the same family who commissioned the work and no doubt desired Bianca to be shown in a positive light.

A woman...gentle in spirit, but all heart. Educated in her father's court to high religious standards, she had only thoughts of compassion and love for others. Humble, modest, meek, patient, endowed with these lovely qualities, she should have found a receptive husband, if he, bewitched by the wit and graces of Bianca Cappello, had been able to understand and prize the simple and true virtues of his unhappy consort.⁴¹

Where this description was challenged by his sources, he chose to argue that the surviving documents were not revealing:

It seems that in 1574 the Inquisitor General agreed to let her [Giovanna] read and keep Boccaccio's uncensored *Decameron*, as well as many other books known to be on the Index. But she cannot have profited to any great degree from this faculty, firstly because of the difficulty she must have faced in reading such a book, not being familiar with classical literature, and also because of the obscenities with which it is filled, so contrary to the reserved and modest nature of the Archduchess.⁴²

Instead of questioning how and why the Duchess wanted forbidden books, Saltini and his successors made much of the quotation drawn from the report by the Venetian ambassador Andrea Gussoni describing the Florentine court and its inmates in 1576:

[Francesco] is married to the Lady Giovanna d'Austria, sister of the Emperor, a Princess of singular goodness, and exemplary religiosity, and as beautiful in spirit as nature has made her plain in appearance, being small, pale-faced, and not very pretty; in intelligence more placid and calm than bright and lofty.⁴³

This description conveniently ignores the circumstances of Giovanna's life in 1576, when she was desperate to return to her Austrian family, abandoned or spied on by many of her courtiers, and confronted with the suspicious deaths of both her sister-in-law Isabella de'Medici and her husband's young sister-in-law Eleonora de Toledo-

⁴¹ 'donna... mite di spirito ma tutto cuore. Educata nella corte paterna con molta religiosità, non ebbe pensieri che non fossero di compassione e di amore pe' suoi simili. Umile, modesta, mansueta, paziente, avrebbe dovuto per queste sue belle qualità, trovar grazia presso il marito; se costui, affascinato dallo spirito e dalle grazie della Bianca Cappello, avesse potuto comprendere e tenere in pregio le semplicissime veraci virtù della sua infelice consorte'. Saltini, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 228.

⁴² 'Si trova che nel 1574 l'Inquisitor Generale le concesse la facoltà di leggere e ritenere il *Decamerone* del Boccaccio, senza le castrature dei Deputati, non che molti altri libri notati all'Indice. Ma di questa facoltà ella non deve aver profittato gran fatto, prima per la difficoltà che doveva presentarle la lettura di quel libro difficile ai non pratici della classica letteratura, e poi per le sconcezze contro il buon costume di che va ripieno, così contrarie all'indole riservata e pudibonda dell'Arciduchessa'. Ibid.

⁴³ '[Francesco] Ha per moglie Madama Giovanna d'Austria, sorella dell'Imperatore, Principessa di singolar bontà, e di esemplar religione, ed altrettanto bella d'animo quanto le è stata la natura scarsa delle bellezze corporali, essendo piccola di statura, di faccia pallida, e di non molto vago aspetto; d'ingegno piuttosto placido e quieto che vivo ed alto'. *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, ed. by Eugenio Alperi (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 1841), Series 2, vol.II, p. 376.

Medici. In view of these circumstances it is perhaps unsurprising that the ambassador found her somewhat subdued. Nevertheless, all of Bianca's biographers avoid challenging this description. Instead of undertaking further investigation, they elaborate upon the ambassador's words, creating the kind of character sketches that Saltini offers. So Mary Steegman describes Giovanna as follows: 'She made up for what she lacked in outward attractions by her gentleness and goodness. She was modest, submissive and very religious...'⁴⁴ while Masi provides her own version in her explanation of Giovanna's financial debts: lacking in intelligence, she was easily taken in by unscrupulous courtiers or fellow Germans.⁴⁵ This image provides the ideal counterpoint for discussions of a brilliant and beautiful Bianca. Biographers have also avoided any further investigation of Giovanna's character as she ultimately plays only a marginal role in the adventures of the principal Venetian protagonist. However, their characterisation of the Duchess as modest, dull and unhappy has ultimately been extremely successful in warding off further interest by other historians looking for a suitable subject for research. In this respect she is very much like her two sisters and indeed many other aristocratic women, who were dismissed as devout and of limited influence. But far from being reclusive and dull, a reconstruction of their lives offers insights into the range of strategies that foreign brides were, and were not, able to use to shape their married lives in the Italian courts. This research also offers opportunities to see how important material goods were in these efforts. Their lives provide us with the opportunity of understanding in greater depth the role and the activities open to the female consort in the Italian courts of the sixteenth century.

Sources

My thesis has resulted from an AHRC funded doctoral project between Queen Mary College and the Medieval and Renaissance Galleries Project at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Through this collaboration I was introduced to the material culture that surrounded aristocratic women and circulated in the courts of sixteenth-century Europe. The V&A collections are particularly rich in the types of luxury object that would have been commissioned by and circulated amongst the noble families of Europe, such as ivory combs, mirrors, jewels, painted *cassoni* and ceramics. During my

⁴⁴ Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 61.

⁴⁵ 'poco intelligente com'era, si lasciava facilmente irretire da qualche cortigiano o da qualche connazionale senza troppi scrupoli'. Masi, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 156.

studentship, I worked with the curators on the galleries project and undertook research on a variety of objects in the collections. The results of this research are visible in an online resource on objects particularly associated with women, as well as in the V&A catalogues and the forthcoming book *Medieval and Renaissance Art, 300-1600*, to be published by the V&A in October 2009. The research I have undertaken on behalf of the V&A has also significantly shaped the focus and subject of my thesis, emphasising the ways in which objects forged connections between individuals and communities.

Interdisciplinary research, combining the study of archival documents, texts and material sources, is a tradition both promoted and fostered at the V&A, thanks to the presence of its active research department. The value of such work is visible in the exhibition on the Renaissance domestic interior and its accompanying book, which resulted from the collaboration, led by Marta Ajmar and Flora Dennis, between a team of historians, curators and archaeologists.⁴⁶ The aim of this project was to shed light on everyday life and the domestic space, areas that, as the exhibition's curators point out, have not often been addressed in mainstream Renaissance history, but were in fact, as the project proved, key *loci* for the development and transmission of cultural and social mores.⁴⁷ My own work within the museum alerted me to the profusion of objects that testified to the importance of life in the domestic sphere, and the value certain types of material culture could assume as means of expression, and as a visual language. The collaboration shaped my thesis by demonstrating the role of objects as conveyors of social and cultural meaning in the early modern period, and the importance, therefore, that receipts, wills, inventories, accounts and letters, all of which tracked the circulation and possession of such objects, might have as a means of shedding light on the values and interests of certain sectors of society, such as women, even elite women, who were otherwise consigned to relative obscurity.⁴⁸ The evidence of foreign influence in the design and decoration of many of the objects in the V&A collections also highlighted the frequent movement of objects across political and cultural boundaries.⁴⁹ This circulation and adaptation of goods and styles linked in with my interest in female

⁴⁶ *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (London: V&A Publications, 2006).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ed. by, pp. 10-12.

⁴⁸ Visible in the decorations that covered them, the colours that were selected for them, the mottos and stories that adorned them, the frequency of their presence in paintings, and their use to mark and celebrate particular life events, such as marriage and birth. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁹ For example, as part of the collaboration, I conducted research on the V&A collection of *pianelle*, a type of overshoe influenced by both Turkish *kub-kab* (bath shoes), and the high-soled Spanish *chopines*.

consorts, who also embarked on cultural and geographical journeys as brides and found it necessary to construct and negotiate new identities and positions for themselves in foreign courts. The V&A collections and my own archival research suggests that both objects and those who used them were not consigned to an immutable, private, enclosed space, but had an active role in both the maintenance and evolution of social life and cultural values. This approach underpins my dissertation examining the Habsburg Archduchesses' employment of material culture as a means of constructing and maintaining relationships, negotiating identity, and wielding power and influence both within and outside the court.

However, while material culture is undoubtedly a key component of my research, it is necessary to stress the rarity of situations in which surviving objects can be correlated with inventories and other extant documentation. As a consequence the sources I have used to conduct research on the Habsburg Archduchesses in question are not physical objects themselves, few if any of which can be specifically linked to these three women, but the broad range of textual documents which chart their acquisition and use. The majority of this evidence is archival and makes up a heterogenous body of documentary genres, ranging from accounts, inventories and wills to correspondence and ambassadorial reports. Each of these types of evidence has potential pitfalls as well as advantages, necessitating a cautious and critical approach. For example, I often draw on accounts and inventories to discuss acquisition. Accounts provide valuable information on the types and quantities of objects bought, their provenance and price, as well as the timing of such purchases. As the accounts I examine are for the most part made up of receipts, they can also provide useful information on the people actively involved in the transaction process and the time taken between receipt of goods and receipt of payment. However, they also have limitations. First of all, as I have highlighted above, not only it is almost impossible to identify extant objects from these types of documents, it is also difficult to gain a clear picture as to what these objects might have looked like – the descriptions provided for clothing, for example, are often minimal and give only limited information as to colour, style and decoration. Secondly, the receipts mostly contain evidence of the purchase of raw materials, so again it can be problematic to attempt to use this information to reconstruct finished products, as the items are often listed without reference to their intended use. The inventories I use, which are almost entirely from the Medici *Guardaroba*, can help in some ways, by providing lists of the finished products rather than the raw materials, and by frequently

noting items as belonging to particular individuals. Nonetheless, some of the same problems highlighted above still apply, for example, the lack of detailed description. They also present intrinsic problems of their own. The frequent listing of the same items in multiple lists with different descriptions can lead to confusion and a misunderstanding of the extent of an individual's material possessions. Finally, both accounts and inventories, as archival resources, are also subject to inevitable *lacunae*, where information is missing for a year or more, which presents further difficulties for researchers attempting to reconstruct the material life of the individuals concerned. Despite these problems, these sources still provide us with extremely valuable data which can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research and offers key insights on the personal tastes, financial activities and material consumption of aristocratic women.

While, as I have argued above, accounts and inventories provide valuable data on the Archduchesses' acquisition and consumption of objects, my research also focuses on gift-giving and the exchange of goods and I employ a variety of sources, ranging from private correspondence to ambassadorial reports, to track the circulation and interpretation of particular items. These texts present further issues as sources and must be approached with care. The diplomatic correspondence which proliferated between the courts during the period under examination was often biased, both politically and personally. The ambassador was rarely neutral and his loyalties influenced his reporting. I attempt to counteract this difficulty by comparing the evidence of ambassadorial reports with information provided by other contemporary sources, such as chronicles. Profound disinterest can be even more problematic than distortion. Ambassadors were not always interested in commenting on the lives, activities and influences of the female consort, usually describing male behaviour and politics. Nonetheless, despite the overarching attention given to the male ruler and his activities, ambassadors' reports do offer valuable insights into court life and often recount gossip and rumours about members of court which are otherwise inaccessible to the modern historian. Furthermore, the ambassadors' reports I have concentrated on, which are included as an appendix to this thesis, are particularly valuable as the ambassadors were permanent residents in Florence. As representatives of their political masters, they were able to gain frequent access to the subjects of their reports and to be eyewitnesses to many of the episodes they narrate.

Alongside the diplomatic letters exchanged by ambassadors, I also employ private correspondence. This material rarely provides a source of private thoughts and feelings, however, as it was generally written by court secretaries rather than the individuals concerned. It is therefore couched in formal language and follows set forms of address and appeal. These characteristics may sometimes obscure or confuse the nature of the relationships between the individuals involved. Because of the use of highly stylised language, conflict, for example, can be hidden under professions of devotion and esteem.

This multiplicity of evidence, despite its problems and challenges, has enabled me to gain insights into the lives and experiences of three otherwise almost completely forgotten women. With a few exceptions, all of the archival material presented is unpublished and I have included several appendices of original documentation. There is one caveat. Because of the restrictions of time, I have limited my remit to materials written in Italian or Latin. However, I have also found a large body of material in German in the archives relating to these three Archduchesses, as yet unpublished and almost completely unexplored.⁵⁰ These papers include correspondence which may shed further light on the relationships and networks of contacts the Archduchesses maintained with their sisters and other figures in their native land, as well as material relating to the Archduchesses' consumption and gift-giving activities, such as the inventory, held amongst the Archduchess Giovanna's accounts, of the silverware that she brought down with her from Innsbruck to her new court in Florence. It has not been possible to employ these sources but they undoubtedly constitute a valuable area for further research and would provide an important means of contextualising the activities of the three Archduchesses in relation to both courtly practices in Italy and in their native country.

Thesis Structure

The first chapter of my thesis provides background information on the life of the Duchesses, their education, the political and economic situation of the Empire, as well as the families they married into and the courts and cities to which they came. This provides the necessary context for subsequent analysis of the actions of the Duchesses and their spouses. The thesis is then divided into two sections. The first section

⁵⁰ These documents are present in the state archives of Florence, Mantua and Modena, as well as in the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv in Munich and the Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in Vienna.

contains four chapters, the first two focussing on Eleonora and Barbara respectively, and the last two on Giovanna and the problems she faced as a consort. Here I aim to outline the organisation of the female court in the sixteenth century and the institutional parameters and limitations within which all three Duchesses operated. I examine their respective responsibilities and activities and the extent of their courts' separation from that of their husbands. I argue that while the offices within the female court may have replicated those of the male court, the power relations between those involved were not the same. The Duchesses all held ambivalent positions. She was both the senior figure in her own court and a counterpart to the ruler, yet she was also a wife and a subordinate to her husband. This meant that the nature of her rapport with the Duke had considerable impact on her relationships with her courtiers and even between the courtiers themselves. I therefore examine the factors that could affect the relationship between the Duchess and her husband, including each Duchess's financial situation, her attitude to her husband and her new family and the presence of rivals such as mistresses. My aim is to challenge commonly held assumptions about the female court as a smaller, less effective mirror of the male court; and to reveal the important roles that these specific Duchesses played in forging connections and alliances through their possessions. I argue that the particular, and sometimes very difficult, position of the female consort is the key to understanding the Duchesses' deployment of gift-giving and consumption strategies to negotiate and manage relationships, and project their public personas.

My second section is dedicated to a closer analysis of these strategies, focussing on the Duchesses' use of material culture as a means of accessing influence and imposing themselves both at court and upon the international stage. The three Habsburg Archduchesses did not gain distinction in areas of traditional patronage. Their artistic commissions were restricted to the religious sphere. Giovanna commissioned a portrait of herself which was to be hung in the sanctuary of Loreto; and she also ordered a small sculpture of Christ Crucified from Giambologna as a further gift to the Holy House.⁵¹ While there is no evidence to show that either Eleonora and Barbara commissioned artistic works, they were involved in architectural patronage, focussing on religious and

⁵¹ ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, p. 96, letter dated 26 March 1574. I must thank Dr Alice Sanger for information relating to the gift of the Christ to Loreto. See also Patrick M. de Winter, 'Recent Accessions of Italian Renaissance Decorative Arts, Part II', *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 73.4 (1986), 142-82 (pp. 171-72).

charitable projects.⁵² Eleonora helped to fund the construction of the Chiesa della Trinità for the Jesuits,⁵³ while Barbara founded the *Conservatorio delle Orfane di Santa Barbara*.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, almost no information survives on their precise contribution to these buildings. In order to investigate the full range of their networks, it is necessary to go beyond the limits of what is traditionally regarded as artistic patronage and to consider other areas of material culture. The surviving evidence indicates that all three Duchesses' gift-giving activities encompassed a wide array of objects. Giovanna's gifts ranged from mother-of-pearl vases and crystal glasses to thimbles and small items of jewellery.⁵⁵ However, by far the greatest amount of information survives for two particular types of object: textiles and foodstuffs. It is upon these that I will be concentrating, as, unlike artistic and religious patronage, the purchase and exchange of these objects enabled the Duchesses to create and sustain contacts with far broader sections of society. The first two chapters of this section examines the employment of textiles. Dress was one of the few areas in which women might enjoy a certain degree of independence of choice and action. This has proved a fruitful area of inquiry given the increasing amount of research available. Alongside a growing interest in clothing amongst social and gender-oriented historians,⁵⁶ there has been increasing analysis of the role of clothing within the male court environment. Marcello Fantoni has examined the importance of livery in cementing the relationship between patron and courtier, while Carlo Belfanti has discussed the Gonzaga duke's habit of giving his cast-off clothing to favoured servants and courtiers.⁵⁷ However, little has been done so far on dress specifically within the female court.⁵⁸ Maria Hayward's work on dress at Henry

⁵² For further discussion of religious patronage of this type and active female patrons in Rome, see Carolyn Valone, 'Women on the Quirinal Hill: Patronage in Rome, 1560-1630', *The Art Bulletin*, LXXVI.1 (1994), 129-46.

⁵³ See chapter one, note 12.

⁵⁴ See chapter three, note 23.

⁵⁵ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1573, p. 454; Fascicolo dated 1568, p. 152; MdP 241, p. 81.

⁵⁶ Historians interested in gender have found in clothing a bountiful seam for research, but they have tended to focus on the middle and lower classes as opposed to women in the court environment. See for example: Ashley, 'Material and Symbolic Gift Giving'; Dolly Mackinnon, 'Charity is worth it when it looks that good': Rural Women and Bequests of Clothing in Early Modern England', in *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 79-93.

⁵⁷ Marcello Fantoni, 'Le corti e i 'modi' del vestire', in *La moda*, ed. by Carlo Marco Belfanti and Fabio Guisberti, Storia d'Italia (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), pp. 737-65. Carlo Belfanti, 'Il dono dell'abito: lusso e consuetudini sociali a Mantova nel Cinquecento. Appunti per una ricerca.', in *Per Mantova una vita: studi in memoria di Rita Castagna*, ed. by Anna Maria Lorenzoni and Roberto Navarrini (Mantua: Publi-Paolini, 1991), pp. 75-82.

⁵⁸ Rosanna Gorris in her study of Renée of France does mention the political impact of the Duchess' clothing choices, but this forms only a small part of her work which is itself a chapter in a collection of

VIII's court is one of the few that addresses the clothing worn by the consort, however, she does not address the political significance of particular choices of dress in any detail, and her main focus is on the male court rather than the female.⁵⁹ Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli's work on Eleonora de Toledo and her *Guardaroba*, while focussing predominantly on the cut and construction of clothing, does discuss Eleonora's socio-political motives for adopting or banning certain colours, styles or materials at court.⁶⁰ They also provide a short introduction to the clothing worn by her successor, Giovanna. However, while they conducted a thorough investigation of the accounts and *Guardaroba* listings for Eleonora and an overview of those for Giovanna, they relied on secondary sources for the discussion of the court dynamics and the policies the two women espoused. While there is a significant amount of recent secondary material on Eleonora de Toledo, they had to fall back on representations of Giovanna taken from sources such as those described above, for example the nineteenth-century historians and archivists Guglielmo Enrico Saltini and Riguccio Galluzzi. This had a considerable impact on their interpretation of the data relating to her *Guardaroba*. So, for example, Landini wrote of Giovanna's choice of dress:

She simply [adhered] to the criteria of behaviour and appearance linked to her role, conforming to a calibrated and austere pomp in harmony with her rather inconspicuous personality.⁶¹

These myths of inconspicuousness and austerity stem from a reliance on out-of-date views of Giovanna. Indeed, the sentence quoted above is immediately followed by the reiteration of the Venetian ambassador's description of Giovanna as 'of singular beauty and exemplary religion... of a somewhat placid and quiet disposition rather than lively or lofty'.⁶² In fact, as I will discuss in chapter seven, the Duchess' choices in clothing herself and her court reveal an attempt to create a more dominating presence. This example alone highlights the need for a re-assessment of the life of the Florentine Duchess, but also the necessity of further examination of the role and activities of the female consort. The consort could deploy her possessions and those of others in

essays on Renée. Gorris, 'D'un chateau à l'autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara (1528-1560)' (pp. 140, 50, 67).

⁵⁹ Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII* (Leeds: Maney, 2007).

⁶⁰ Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005). I have employed their appendix of Eleonora's *Guardaroba* in Appendix 4.

⁶¹ Ibid. p.42.

⁶² See note 34.

imaginative ways even in difficult circumstances. At the same time, I suggest that the potential ambiguity of material culture as a medium could, and was used when she wished to avoid open conflict. As such, material culture can provide scholars with a valuable means of investigating and assessing the consort's political, social and economic position at court and outside.

My second case-study focuses on the gifts of food that were sent to and from the Duchesses. Here again, while scholars have addressed Renaissance banqueting,⁶³ food as a symbol of social hierarchies, and food in early modern dietetics,⁶⁴ there has been rarely any discussion of food as gifts in the early modern period.⁶⁵ Yet foodstuffs were one of the most popular and frequent objects exchanged. As immaterial goods of low economic value, they were particularly suited for use as gifts by women.⁶⁶ In chapters eight and nine, I focus on some specific issues surrounding food-gifts in the sixteenth century. I examine the advice given in contemporary medical treatises on the suitability of different kinds of foods for different palates and whether this can be correlated to the types of foodstuffs given. I also look at concerns surrounding food availability, problems of transportation and the conservation of foodstuffs, and the significance of such issues in relation to the symbolic value of food-gifts. I discuss the position of the consort as both the recipient and sender of such gifts and their particular use as items of relatively small standing in the creation of patronage relationships and in the process of social and political mediation.

The central tenet in both my case-studies is that the objects that these Duchesses bought, gave and received had multiple meanings which can be dissected by studying owner, receiver, means of transmission and the type of object itself. As such they provided the female consort with the means to act effectively within the framework of her position.

⁶³ See for example Giancarlo Malacarne, *Sulla mensa del principe: alimentazione e banchetti alla corte dei Gonzaga* (Modena: Il Bulino, 2000). Malacarne goes into great detail on the organisation and bureaucracy of the court dedicated to the preparation and serving of food, but this is almost entirely in relation to the main ducal court. He does discuss gifts that were sent to and from various members of the ducal family, but he does not provide any analysis of the symbolic meaning of such gestures, or their role in the development of patronage relationships.

⁶⁴ See for example Massimo Montanari, *Alimentazione e cultura nel Medioevo* (Rome: Laterza, 1988); Timothy J. Tomasik and Juliann M. Vitullo, *At the Table: Metaphorical and Material Cultures of Food in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). For a discussion of dietetics, see Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁶⁵ One of the few treatments of the subject is by Heal, 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange'.

⁶⁶ Renata Ago discusses the circulation of low value goods by women in her article: Ago, 'Donne, doni e public relations'.

Chapter One

Three Sisters; Three Duchesses

This chapter focuses on the political, cultural and economic conditions into which Giovanna, Eleonora and Barbara Habsburg were born and those that they were to encounter in their married lives. I will also discuss the Duchesses' respective marriage and dowry negotiations, and the lives and characters of their immediate predecessors in Florence, Mantua and Ferrara. All of these factors will have had a bearing on the Duchesses' roles as consorts, their relationships with relatives and courtiers, the internal structures of their individual courts, and the spheres of action that were open to them. These factors also had a profound impact on the Duchesses' deployment of gift-giving and consumption strategies. Their foreign background and the particular political and economic conditions in which they found themselves greatly influenced their reliance on material culture as a means of sustaining key relationships and negotiating their new identities.

Early Life, Education and Religion

Most of the secondary sources for Giovanna and her sisters are concerned with their lives after their arrival in Italy; however, an understanding of their childhood, their education, the political stance of their family and their relationships as sisters is essential for analysis of their later activities.¹

¹ The relatively brief biographical details I provide have come mostly from the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960 - ongoing), together with another biographical work dedicated to the members of the Habsburg family: Brigitte Hamann, *Die Habsburger: ein biographisches Lexikon* (Vienna: Ueberreuter, 1988), and a more general work on the private life of the Habsburg family from its inception to its decline: Karl Vocelka and Lynne Heller, *Die private Welt der Habsburger: Leben und Alltag einer Familie* (Graz: Styria, 1998), especially part II: 'Lebenswege der Erzherzoginnen'.

Giovanna, Barbara and Eleonora of Austria were daughters of the Emperor Ferdinand I and Anna, Queen of Bohemia and Hungary, also known as Anna Jagiello, as her father belonged to the Jagiello dynasty (Appendix 1).² Ferdinand ruled over the hereditary Habsburg lands of Upper and Lower Austria, Carinthia, Styria and the Tyrol, now in today's Austria, along with parcels of land in south-western Germany. Through marriage to Anna, he was able to add Bohemia and Hungary to his possessions, and the various lands attached to them, parts of what are modern Poland and Ukraine. As the elected Holy Roman Emperor, he also governed over a loose assemblage of city-states and territorial principalities, a group of whose rulers constituted his electors.³

From their mother, the three Archduchesses were able to claim royal blood; and this became a matter of great distinction in the Italian cities where they came to reside: the Florentines referred with pride to their '*Regina Giovanna*' (my italics).⁴ Eleonora was the eldest of the three, born on 2 November 1534; Barbara was born on 30 April 1539, while Giovanna was born on the 24th of January 1547, the youngest of the 15 children, three boys and 12 girls. Three days later, her mother died, after 21 years of almost incessant childbearing.

After the death of their mother Giovanna, and those of her siblings who were still unmarried, grew up at the court of Innsbruck in the Tyrol. Her father and, from 1564, her brother, the newly anointed Emperor Maximilian II, resided at the imperial court in Vienna. The latter was considered too dangerous for the young family as it was under frequent threat of Turkish assault.⁵ In Innsbruck, they received an education modelled on the religious-charitable ideals of the Jesuits with whom the Habsburgs had close ties.⁶ As in other major courts in Europe, the education of the male members of

² She was the eldest child and only daughter of Vladislaus II of Bohemia and Hungary; when her younger brother Louis died in 1526, her husband Ferdinand claimed the thrones of Bohemia and Hungary in her name, hence her title of Queen of both countries. See Hamann, *Die Habsburger*, p. 53.

³ Paula S. Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1490-1848: Attributes of Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. xviii-xix, 7.

⁴ Agostino Lapini, *Diario fiorentino di Agostino Lapini dal 252 al 1596*, ed. by Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini (Florence: Sansoni, 1900), p. 148. Her royal status was also highlighted in the official literature: Domenico Mellini, in his published account of Giovanna's entry into Florence and the festivities that took place to celebrate the marriage, entitled his work: Domenico Mellini, *Descrizione dell'entrata della ... Reina Giovanna d'Austria et dell'apparato, fatto in Firenze nella venuta, & per le ... nozze di S. Altezza et dell'illustrissimo S. Don Francesco de Medici, prencipe di Fiorenza, & di Siena* (Florence, 1566).

⁵ Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 12, 14, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Princes and Artists: Patronage and Ideology at Four Habsburg Courts, 1517-1633* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), p. 86.

⁶ In 1551, Ferdinand I summoned the Jesuits from Spain; they established themselves in the University of Vienna, and then in Innsbruck, Graz and Linz. He was not, however, as actively pro-Catholic and anti-Protestant as Charles V, and his successor Philip II of Spain, or indeed as his own son, the Archduke Ferdinand; although as much a fervent Catholic as his daughters, the political situation constrained him to

the family was considered of paramount importance and was correspondingly wide-ranging and thorough. Women's lessons on the other hand were restricted predominantly to languages, music and needlework.⁷ Only in a few areas – religious instruction and hunting– were they educated together with their male counterparts.⁸ However, even this relatively narrow education was not pursued particularly diligently. Although Italian was on the list of languages to be taught to the male members of the family, it appears that the Archduchesses did not receive such linguistic instruction.⁹ The evidence for this comes from the presence of interpreters for both Giovanna and Barbara,¹⁰ and a letter from Sigismondo Rossi di Parma, Count of San Secondo, who was sent to Austria to serve Giovanna, which also hints at the Archduchess' possible lack of linguistic confidence:

Her Highness [Giovanna] had promised me that in two days time she would speak ten words in Italian to me, and as I went one evening to take some air after dinner, Her Highness kept her promise by bidding me good evening and telling me that I was welcome in Italian, and then she had her majordomo explain to me in German that she would not speak further as she thought I would laugh and tease her...¹¹

Although not highly educated, Giovanna and her sisters were profoundly influenced by their Jesuit teachers and the devotional side of their education. They all endeavoured to act in support of the Jesuit order when living in Italy.¹² Giovanna,

adopt a mediating rather than extremist role. Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 23, 25. Karin Jutta MacHardy, *War, Religion and Court Patronage in Habsburg Austria: The Social and Cultural Dimensions of Political Interaction, 1521-1622* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 53-54.

⁷ For further discussion of female education and upbringing, see Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, 'Women as Exemplars of Domestic Virtue in the Literary and Material Culture of the Italian Renaissance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London: The Warburg Institute, 2004), chapter five.

⁸ Vocolka and Heller, *Die private Welt der Habsburger*, p. 268.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ An interpreter is listed amongst those accompanying Giovanna to Florence, ASF, MdP 6355/A, p. 12r; and Alfonso Lazzari asserts that Alfonso learnt German under the tuition of a certain Don Tiburzio Dreylfeder, Barbara's chaplain and interpreter. Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara*, p. 129. The Duchesses did learn Italian, however, and there is evidence that Giovanna could speak Italian by at least 1574, as the Cardinal of Trent wrote a letter of greeting to her in September of that year in Italian, saying that he had heard that she understood the language very well. Allowing for the flattery of the letter's author, this praise would only work if it was at least partly true. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 69.

¹¹ 'Sua Altezza mi haveva promesso fra due giorni di parlare con meco dieci parole italiane, et andando io la sera a pigliare il fresco doppio cena, mi fu da Sua Altezza osservato la promessa con darmi la buona sera et dirmi ch'io fussi il benvenuto in Italiano et di poi mi fece dire dal signor Maiordomo in Tedesco che non seguitava a parlare più oltre, perchè dubitava che io non mi burlassi et ridessi di lei...' This extract is published in: Carlo Odoardo Tosi, 'Del matrimonio del principe Francesco de' Medici con l'arciduchessa Giovanna d'Austria', *Rivista Fiorentina*, 1.2 (1908), 10-19, (pp. 14-15).

¹² An example of such successful support is provided by Eleonora. Her confessor from 1588, the Jesuit father Antonio Folcario, was also her biographer, publishing an encomiastic account of her life in Mantua: Antonio Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora ... duchessa di Mantova ... coll'aggiunta delle meditationi che faceva in vita, e dell'estratto di quelle colle quali si preparò alla morte, etc* (Mantua,

Barbara, and Eleonora all had Jesuit confessors with them in Italy.¹³ All three were rigorous Catholics, on very good terms with the papacy; so much so, in fact, that Giovanna received a golden rose from the pope – a significant mark of approbation, as it was given as a reward to ‘defenders of the faith’.¹⁴ However, although Giovanna, Barbara and Eleonora came to be celebrated as paragons of religious devotion by diarists and encomiasts, they do not appear to have been quite as fervent as their elder sisters Magdalena, Helena and Margareta. The Count of San Secondo wrote to Francesco in Florence:

According to what I can find out from the household servants, she [Giovanna] cannot wait to come to this region [Italy], and nor can Queen Barbara, as the Queens Maddalena, Margareta and Helena are so completely dedicated to spiritual devotion that the whole house is full of *teatini* [this may be a reference to the Theatines, a religious order founded in 1524], they listen to three or four masses and offices every morning, and during the day vespers and compline, where everyone must attend according to tradition, which is a great annoyance...¹⁵

1598). From her arrival in Mantua, Eleonora applied constant pressure on her husband Guglielmo to get him to receive the Jesuit order in Mantua, a task that did not reach a successful outcome until twenty years later, in 1584, when the Jesuits took over the Church of San Salvatore, and the house attached to it. Eleonora then provided the order with a quarter of her jewels, assigning the remaining three quarters to her children, in order to help with the construction of the Chiesa della Trinità. Sonia Pellizzer, 'Eleonora d'Asburgo', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1993), pp. 419-22 (pp. 420-21). See also Giancarlo Schizzerotto, *Rubens a Mantova: fra gesuiti, principi e pittori: con spigolature sul suo soggiorno italiano, 1600-1608* (Mantua: Grassi, 1979), pp. 13-61.

¹³ The Jesuits sent Giovanna and Barbara the German-speaking confessors, Father Wilhelm Elderen and Laurenz Hermann respectively, Mario Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, Storia della compagnia di Gesù in Italia, v. 5 (Rome: Edizioni 'La Civiltà Cattolica', 1992), p. 350, while Eleonora's confessor was Antonio Folcario, who later wrote a biography of her, as did his fellow Jesuit Antonio Possevino. Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora*; Antonio Possevino, *Vita et morte della serenissima Eleonora arciduchessa di Austria et duchessa de Mantova. Recitate nelle generali essequie di lei* (Mantua, 1594). Evidence of Giovanna's work on behalf of the Jesuits is revealed in a letter she sent to the Pope. In this missive, dated to February 1566, she explains that she has visited many monasteries and holy places, 'luoghi pii', since her arrival in Florence, and that, having noticed that the current residence of the Jesuits was far too small for them, she wished to have them transferred to the Church and Convent of San Pancratio, currently occupied by the monks of Vallombrosa. Unfortunately the monks were refusing to move and so she begged the Pope to intervene on her behalf in this matter. Another letter dated to March 1567 reveals that she was also involved in finding new accommodation for the Jesuits in Siena. Both letters are kept in ASF, MdP 5927/A, Inserto 1, pp. 36-37 and Inserto 3, p. 11.

¹⁴ The golden rose was also given to Anna, Duchess of Bavaria and Giovanna's sister, by Pope Pius IV in 1562. It is now on display in the *Schatzkammer* of her Munich Residence. Giovanna received her rose from Pope Pius V on the 13th March 1568. Her relationship with the Pope was always very positive, marked by frequent exchanges of gifts. See Maria Fubini Leuzzi, 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze fra etichetta e impegno politico: Giovanna d'Austria', in *Le donne Medici*, ed. by Giulia Calvi and Riccardo Spinelli, vol.I, pp. 233-56. The official letter which accompanied the gift of the rose can be found in ASF, MM 16, Inserto 13. I have also found additional evidence of Giovanna commissioning a tabernacle to hold the rose in ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, pp. 136v, 148v and 149r.

¹⁵ 'Per quello che io posso investigare dai domestici di casa, ella non desidera altro che venirsene in coteste bande, come fa anco la Regina Barbera, essendo che la Regina Maddalena, Margherita et Helena

Nevertheless, despite holding less fervent views, my research will demonstrate that Barbara and Giovanna were keenly aware of the value and power of a reputation for piety.

So strong was the tradition of activity on behalf of the Jesuits by female members of the Habsburg family, that it could occasionally cause embarrassment to the order. In 1569, the Jesuits were forced to accept the creation of a Jesuit college at Hall, in Tyrol, because the remaining unwed Archduchesses: Magdalene and Helena had already publicised their support for the project. Although it appears that they did not wish to acquiesce, the Jesuits found it impossible to refuse. To do so would damage the Archduchesses' public reputation.¹⁶ This demonstrates a clear link between religious endeavour and public perceptions of status. The male members of the Habsburg family were not nearly as overtly Catholic as the women. This was in part a consequence of the varied religious makeup of the lands over which they presided. The majority of the nobility in the hereditary Habsburg lands of Upper and Lower Austria, Styria, Carinthia and Carniola had in the course of the sixteenth century embraced Protestantism.¹⁷ Every time a Habsburg monarch attempted to raise money, or challenge particular privileges, he faced demands for changes in religious policies, pro-Lutheran or pro-Catholic according to the region in question. So, for example, in 1526, meeting with the Imperial Diet in Augsburg in order to raise funds to counter the Turkish advance, Ferdinand I was forced to agree to allow the German princes who had adopted the Lutheran reform to impose it upon their subjects.¹⁸ The heterogeneous nature of the Habsburg-controlled lands meant that a strong, centralised government was almost impossible to achieve. Each region had its own laws and its own privileges and the nobles and ruling Electors were loath to accept any changes that might have adverse financial consequences for them. It was this lack of a coherent framework of power, coupled with the Emperor's reliance on his subordinates for election, and his constant debilitating need for money that effectively prevented Habsburg Emperors from adopting an uncompromising pro-

si sono talmente date allo spirito che hanno di continuo la casa piena di teatini, odono ogni mattina tre e quattro messe e offitij, et il giorno vespro et completa dove bisogna per l'antico uso ci concorrino tutte, il che è fastidio non picciolo...'. Tosi, 'Del matrimonio del principe Francesco', (p. 14).

¹⁶ Gernot Heiss, 'Princes, Jesuits and the Origins of the Counter-Reformation in the Habsburg Lands', in *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. by R.J.W. Evans and T.V. Thomas (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 92-109 (p. 98).

¹⁷ Georg Heilingsetzer, 'The Austrian Nobility, 1600-1650', in *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. by R.J.W. Evans and T.V. Thomas (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 245-60 (p. 246).

¹⁸ Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 23.

Catholic policy.¹⁹ However, although conciliatory rather than aggressive when faced with Protestant encroachment within his lands, the Habsburg Emperor could not afford to be overly appeasing. He needed the support of the Papacy, just as much as that of the Electors, in order to maintain his pre-eminence above the other German princes. His confirmation as Emperor by the Pope gave him coveted access to honours, titles and positions which he could then profitably sell.²⁰ This may have been one reason why the Habsburg women were so active religiously and made their activities public – not officially endowed with political power, but still representing the Habsburg family, they could safely provide the Pope with assurances and testimonies of the Catholic creed followed by the Habsburgs, while allowing the Emperor and Archdukes to maintain a fine balance between the opposing sides.

In emulating the public nature of the religious conduct of the Habsburg sisters who remained in Austria, Eleonora, Barbara and Giovanna would simply transfer the ideals and activities that were expected of them in Austria to their new homes in Italy. This value of public devotion and dedication on the part of elite women, was supported and encouraged by the Jesuits.²¹ This is confirmed by a letter sent to the General of the Jesuit order Francesco Borgia in 1566, in which Magdalena and her sisters Helena and Margareta were described as keeping the country within the Catholic fold by their virtuous example and their pious works.²² However, as I will demonstrate, the Duchesses might also employ devotional activities not only to set a good Catholic example, but also as an opportunity to highlight their status and identity, and to construct decorous public images as devout wives and influential Catholic consorts. Far from defining them as dull or compliant, this image of devout engagement with the religious orders afforded them much greater authority in the secular world.

Marriages and Dowries

While an excellent genealogy was crucial to an elite marriage, the material elements were key to its successful negotiation. However elite, the Austrian Habsburgs faced severe financial strains in providing dowries for all their daughters. Marriage alliances

¹⁹ This weakness, as I will discuss further in chapter five, also prevented any effective intervention in the problems that arose between Giovanna and Francesco.

²⁰ MacHardy, *War, Religion and Court Patronage*, p. 53.

²¹ See Valone, 'Women on the Quirinal Hill' and Carolyn Valone, 'Piety and Patronage: Women and the Early Jesuits', in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. by Ann E. Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 157-84.

²² Heiss, 'Princes, Jesuits and the Origins of the Counter-Reformation' (p. 108 note 36).

were carefully considered. They were essential to acquire financial and military support amongst electors and other powerful nobles for the ongoing war against the Turks who were constantly threatening the eastern borders of the empire. In 1564 the Habsburgs had debts mounting to 12 million *Gulden*.²³ The financial problems were due, in part, to the ongoing expenditures incurred defending against the Turks, and to the increasing expense of supporting not only the Emperor's own court and household, but also that of his daughters in Innsbruck and his two sons, Ferdinand and Maximilian who had their own separate establishments.²⁴ Suitable connections (ones which had limited financial burdens) were therefore deemed necessary. Eleonora was the first of the three sisters to be married. A union was first discussed between the Archduchess and the son of the Elector John Frederick of Saxony. However this arrangement fell through over religious differences, as the Elector and his son were firm Lutherans.²⁵ Eleonora may not have even wanted to marry, as Possevino remarked in his encomium, but in 1561 she agreed to wed Guglielmo I, Duke of Mantua and Monferrato.²⁶

Giovanna and Barbara had almost simultaneous marriages to Francesco de' Medici and Alfonso II d'Este respectively, and the negotiations involved were as complex as those for Eleonora. Initially, it was unclear which daughter's hand was being sought. It was impossible for the suitors to see the Archduchesses in person and so envoys were sent in their stead to give their advice on the most suitable candidate. The Medici envoy reported from Innsbruck on the characteristics of each one in turn, saying that Magdalene was 29 and did not want to marry, Helena had a hunchback, Barbara was skinny and not very cheerful, and Giovanna looked like a nine year old, even though she was actually 13 or 14. The envoy added that he had watched them eat and noted down their physiognomy, actions and tastes. Based on his observations he would propose Margherita (Margareta) as the best of them; she was plump with a good complexion and a cheerful disposition.²⁷ The envoy's report highlights the particular characteristics that were considered essential for a good consort: physical maturity, beauty and good humour, the first two necessary for the essential task of producing healthy heirs, the third perhaps for dealing with the often difficult transition to an alien

²³ MacHardy, *War, Religion and Court Patronage*, pp. 55-56.

²⁴ The Archduchesses who had gotten along on 30,100 florins in 1553-1555 now required 40,000 for one year alone. Paula S. Fichtner, *Ferdinand I of Austria: The Politics of Dynasticism in the Age of the Reformation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 238-39.

²⁵ Hamann, *Die Habsburger*, pp. 77-78, and Fichtner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 237.

²⁶ Possevino, *Vita et morte della serenissima Eleonora*, p. 16.

²⁷ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie 1, Filza 41, pp. 95-96.

court and the confrontation with foreign customs. These descriptions, together with those provided by the Venetian ambassadors demonstrate the openness with which the physical characteristics of these women were discussed. Lorenzo Priuli, in his report of 1566, described Giovanna as small and thin, and said that for this reason it was thought that she might be unable to have children.²⁸ This prediction was to reveal itself as curiously accurate, as the post-mortem conducted on Giovanna's body in 1578, after her death in childbirth, showed that she had a physical deformity of the lower spine and pelvis that impeded delivery (figure 9).²⁹ The struggle to provide an heir was a central issue in both Barbara and Giovanna's marriages and it was a key factor in choosing which Archduchess to marry, as the interest in the physical characteristics of the sisters displayed by both Venetian and Florentine envoys proves. These marriages were typical of inter-dynastic alliances in that they were far from being love matches. Francesco visited Giovanna once prior to her wedding and was already conducting an affair with the Venetian Bianca Cappello, whom he would marry less than two months after Giovanna's death. Alfonso also met his future wife for the first time in July 1565 when he went to visit her, five months before the wedding was due to be held. Despite the envoy's recommendations, however, it appears that Ferdinand wished to offer only Giovanna and Barbara as possible brides, and both Francesco de' Medici and Alfonso d'Este attempted to lay claim to Giovanna.³⁰ The Este envoy, however, found he was too late when he made his request – the Medici had already made their bid and been promised the younger and more attractive sister.³¹ Alfonso attempted to bargain, agreeing to take Barbara in return for being made Archduke by the Emperor and for having the conflict with the Medici over the question of precedence resolved in his favour.³² However, at the death of Ferdinand in 1564, he was forced to agree to marry

²⁸ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, serie 2, II, ed. by Alberi, p. 79.

²⁹ Galluzzi, *Storia del granducato*, III, p. 74; and Fabrizio Winspeare, *Isabella Orsini e la corte medicea del suo tempo* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1961), p. 72. The reports of Giovanna's physical deformities are confirmed by work done by the Medici Project, headed by Gino Fornaciari, Director of the Paleopathology laboratory at the University of Pisa and Donatella Lippi, lecturer in the history of medicine at the University of Florence, together with the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Fiorentino (the department in charge of the Florentine Museums), which has exhumed the Medici tombs in the Church of San Lorenzo. The lower part of Giovanna's backbone clearly shows a severe scoliosis. Marco Ferri, *I medici riesumano i Medici. Cronaca di una straordinaria avventura alla scoperta dei segreti della grande dinastia fiorentina* (Florence: Nuova Toscana, 2005), p. 175.

³⁰ Giovanna had also been requested by the Voivoda of Transilvania and the king of Denmark, Leuzzi, 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze' (p. 237).

³¹ Luigi Carcereri, *Cosimo primo granduca* (Verona: M. Bettinelli, 1926), I, pp. 135-36.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 135. According to Alfonso Lazzari, this issue of precedence dated back to a visit of the Emperor Charles V to the Pope in September 1541. Along the way, he was entertained at Lucca by Ercole II d'Este and Cosimo I de' Medici, and here it appears that the Este Duke rode at the right hand of the

Barbara without making any conditions, as he recognised that the new Emperor, Maximilian II looked very favourably on the Florentine family and he needed to win his favour.³³ The bitter nature of the conflict over precedence was in part due to the relatively recent ascent to power of the Medici family. Although extremely wealthy, they were still regarded by many of the other ruling families in Italy as upstarts, coming as they did from the mercantile classes. Florence had only ceased to be a Republic in the lifetime of Francesco's father Cosimo, who had been granted the dukedom of Tuscany by Charles V in 1537. Now he was intent upon acquiring the rank of Grand Duke from the Pope. The other Italian potentates reacted negatively, fearing that their own rank would be devalued as a consequence.³⁴ The Este, as an ancient aristocratic family who had dominated political life in Ferrara since the thirteenth century, felt particularly threatened by Cosimo's actions and competed aggressively with him for preference with the Emperor, attempting to persuade him to adjudicate the precedence case in their favour.³⁵ The Medici reacted by refusing to allow Giovanna to attend her sister's wedding in Ferrara, or even to enter the duchy's territory.³⁶ They also kept a watchful

Emperor while Cosimo rode on the left, and also, at a banquet, had the honour of proffering the Emperor a napkin when dining, a duty apparently due to the greatest prince amongst those present. Ercole used this as an argument for claiming precedence over Cosimo, who, however, opposed him strongly and publicly, giving rise to a long and bitter conflict that involved diplomats across Europe. Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara*, p. 5. The struggle for precedence is also discussed in Giuseppe Mondaini, *La questione di precedenza fra il duca Cosimo I de' Medici e Alfonso II d'Este* (Florence: Raffaello Ricci, 1898). In it he describes some of the diplomatic problems this issue raised, such as the occasion when the Venetians took advantage of the conflict between the ambassadors from Florence and Ferrara over precedence and refused to send an ambassador to Florence, going back on a previous agreement of reciprocity, and humiliating Cosimo: Mondaini, *La questione di precedenza*, pp. 4-5. Further reason for Alfonso's attempt to win the Emperor's support in the conflict was the fact that the Pope Pius IV favoured the Medici and was attempting to rule on the question in their favour. Carcereri, *Cosimo primo*, p. 138.

³³ Ibid. p. 140.

³⁴ Lorenzo Priuli, for example, reported in his despatches as follows: 'Il duca di Mantova...considerando che la grandezza di Fiorenza non è buona per lui, e come principe inferiore temendo ed avendo invidia, necessariamente odia il duca, ed a queste nozze non ha mandato alcuno rappresentante per onorarlo'. (The Duke of Mantua...considering that Florence's greatness is not a good thing from his point of view, and fearing and envying it as a Prince of lower rank, naturally hates the Duke and has chosen not to send a representative to honour this wedding). *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, serie 2, II, ed. by Alberi, p. 85.

³⁵ See note 32. The Este also had reason to hate the Medici because of Cosimo's seizing of the territory of the Garfagnana, previously under Ferrarese control, following the war between the Spanish and the French in 1557. Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara*, pp. 3-4.

³⁶ ASF, MdP 1, Inserto 1, (unpaginated) letter dated 24th October 1565. The struggle to ensure that Giovanna did not even come within sight of Modena is also chronicled in the report by Polidoro Castelli on his way down to Florence with Giovanna (see Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 25 November 1565).

eye on his activities, as their envoy's detailed reports on Alfonso II's visit to Innsbruck in July 1565 demonstrate.³⁷

The marriage negotiations for the Habsburg Archduchesses started in 1564 and continued right up to the end of 1565 when Barbara and Giovanna's respective weddings took place. Their dowries were set at 100,000 Rhenish florins each, half to be delivered in the year following the consummation of the marriage, and the rest a year after that;³⁸ the same arrangement that had earlier been put in place for Eleonora.³⁹ Each Archduchess was also accorded an annual provision, also set out in the contracts, *pro libito suo uti*; Giovanna was allocated the amount of 10,000 *scudi*, as was Barbara, while Eleonora was allocated 7,000 *scudi*.⁴⁰ In return for the dowries, the Archduchesses renounced any claim to the Habsburg lands; however, as the dowry was administered and invested by their husbands, this left them entirely dependent upon their allowances, apart from what they might accrue by gifts or legacies. As I will discuss, this could and did have a profound impact on their ability to exert influence and assert their identity and affected their relationships with those around them.

Wedding Festivities

Giovanna and Barbara's marriage ceremonies were initially intended to take place simultaneously in Trent,⁴¹ however, conflicts over precedence erupted as Francesco and Alfonso contended the right to be married first and the weddings were postponed.⁴² Instead it was decided that the two Archduchesses should travel down to Mantua. Here they would make separate entrances, and then journey on to their respective cities of Ferrara and Florence for their actual weddings. Much of the information that survives

³⁷ The Count of San Secondo wrote in his dispatches that the courtiers who had accompanied Alfonso to Innsbruck had not behaved well and looked more like tramps than gentlemen. ASF, MdP 516/A, p. 947.

³⁸ ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato 330, folder entitled 'Documenti concernanti il matrimonio di Alfonso II con Barbara d'Austria'(sottofascicolo 1969-II), document 1969.II.3: 'Originale dello Stromento Dotale di Madama Barbara d'Austria, sorella dell'Imperador Massimiliano II destinata in Isposa ad Alfonso II Duca di Ferrara', p. 4. ASF, MM 16, Inserto 6, p. 33v.

³⁹ ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo 1, p. 5.

⁴⁰ ASF, MM 16, Inserto 6, p. 33v; ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato 330, folder entitled 'Documenti concernanti il matrimonio di Alfonso II con Barbara d'Austria'(sottofascicolo 1969-II), document 1969.II.3, p. 4; ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo 1, p. 5.

⁴¹ Maximilian II had hoped that by arranging the weddings to take place at the same time in Trent, he could rely on the Bishop of Trent, Cristoforo Madruzzo, an experienced diplomat, to control the situation and avoid any confrontations between the Medici and the Este. Luciano Chiappini, *Gli Estensi: mille anni di storia* (Ferrara: Corbo, 2001), p. 324.

⁴² Giovanni Ricci, 'Una principessa 'tedesca' a Ferrara: Barbara d'Asburgo (1565-1572)', in *Corti rinascimentali a confronto: letteratura, musica, istituzioni*, ed. by Barbara Marx, Tina Matarrese and Paolo Trovato (Florence: F. Cesati, 2003), pp. 99-108 (p. 100).

for these journeys comes from the reports by the Venetian ambassadors. It is important to recognise that although their accounts are very detailed and useful, they could also be biased. They often highlight or even distort certain aspects of events, according to the varying political standpoint of Venice herself, who, for example, was strongly hostile to Florence until 1578 when Francesco finally married Bianca Cappello. So, for example, although Alvise Contarini correctly reported that Alfonso was marrying one of the Habsburg Archduchesses, he also declared that Alfonso was a firm favourite of the Emperor and had been allowed to choose whichever sister most pleased him. This version of events is not corroborated by a document kept in the Modenese archive, which contains the instructions given to the Count Ippolito Turchi, to ask first for the hand of Giovanna, a request later denied by the Emperor.⁴³

Contarini also provided further episodes highlighting the purported rivalry between the Este and the Medici on the journey from Trent. He reported in his account of Ferrara that for the entry of the two Archduchesses to Mantua, prior to their marriages, the Duke of Mantua had greatly upset Cosimo and pleased Alfonso by placing the Este arms above those of the Medici in all the decorations that lined the streets. Contarini also added that it may have been for this reason that Giovanna refused to show any sign of pleasure while on Mantuan territory.⁴⁴ The Florentine envoys who accompanied Giovanna in Innsbruck and on her journey also showed strong interest in the relationship between the two sisters. The Count of San Secondo wrote from Rovereto that on leaving Trent in separate convoys, the two sisters shed tears, but that Giovanna

Although she had wept at her sister's departure, nonetheless looked a lot more cheerful than when she had been in her company.⁴⁵

In another letter he reported on her behaviour in Mantua, where, helpfully confirming the Venetian ambassador's account, he wrote that Giovanna had refused to eat with her

⁴³ ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato 330 (unpaginated).

⁴⁴ 'Il qual Duca [Guglielmo], in questo passaggio della Duchessa [Giovanna], ha fatto un atto che è molto piaciuto a Ferrara, e per il contrario ha molto dispiaciuto a Fiorenza, che è stato il metter sopra gli archi e nei luoghi pubblici l'arme della casa d'Este sopra quella della casa de' Medici; ed essendo dimandato a Sua Eccellenza se ciò era stato fatto di ordine suo, disse di sì, perchè quando avesse fatto altrimenti avria fatto troppo pregiudizio a se stesso, che pretende precedere; per la qual cosa dicono che la Duchessa di Fiorenza, mentre fu sul Mantovano, mai volle fare alcun segno di allegrezza'. *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, ed. by Eugenio Alberi, Appendix (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 1863), p. 246.

⁴⁵ 'ancorche havesse pianto la partita della sorella, nondimeno mi è parso vedergli assai più allegrezza di quando ella era in compagnia'. ASF, MdP 518, pp. 236-237.

sisters, Barbara and Eleonora, and stayed in her room during the entire evening's festivities.⁴⁶ It is difficult to gauge to what extent these episodes reveal a discordant personal relationship between the two sisters, and to what extent an artificial rivalry was deliberately encouraged by the Este and the Medici. However, it is possible to say that Giovanna's actions in Mantua indicate her preoccupation with rank and her implacable nature when convinced that she was not receiving the proper respect due to her position.

The Medici placed great emphasis on Giovanna's royal lineage, and were anxious to emphasise her status. Giovanna did not go straight to Florence but made her way down from Trent in a triumphal progress carefully planned by Cosimo, who supervised who was to meet the bride and the cities where it was appropriate to stop. The political importance of her movements and the concern the Medici showed to maintain control over them is demonstrated in a letter from Cosimo to his son Francesco. He urged him to ensure that Giovanna did not enter the territory of the Este family,⁴⁷ although she could be allowed to go to Mantua to visit her sister and her Gonzaga husband.⁴⁸ At a series of carefully selected locations, the new bride was greeted by high-ranking Italian members of the clergy and nobles, such as Paolo Giordano Orsini, her soon-to-be brother-in-law, married to Francesco's sister Isabella.⁴⁹ At each of these meetings she would have been fêted and received with elaborate ceremonies and gift-giving. When she arrived at Poggio a Caiano, the last stop before her entry into Florence, Cosimo finally met her and placed upon her shoulders a magnificent necklace of pearls, diamonds and rubies⁵⁰ and there were also detailed instructions on how the ceremonial cavalry were to come out to meet her at Firenzuola and how they were to behave when accompanying her on her journey:

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 538.

⁴⁷ ASF, MdP 1, Inserto 1, letter dated 24 October 1565. The refusal to allow Giovanna to visit Ferrara and attend the Este wedding of Alfonso to Barbara was dictated by the conflict over precedence between the two families. A parallel struggle developed to persuade the Gonzaga Duke to come to Florence for the Medici wedding. However, Guglielmo appears to have refused, on the pretext that his wife Eleonora was pregnant and could not be expected to make the journey to Florence. Instead, they both attended Barbara's wedding in Ferrara, to Cosimo's considerable bitterness. ASF, MdP 518, p. 570.

⁴⁸ ASF, MdP 1, Inserto 1, letter dated 24 October 1565.

⁴⁹ ASF, MdP 6355/A, p. 7r.

⁵⁰ Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 65. While Steegman provides no reference for this story, there is evidence that various items of jewellery were given to Giovanna at Poggio, ASF, MdP 616, Inserto 18, pp. 248r-v. Diamonds were a traditional Medici emblem, while pearls symbolized purity and chastity, which is why courtesans were often forbidden from wearing them. These jewels may have been selected as gifts for Giovanna precisely because of their associations.

The pick of the troops from Mugello and Pontassieve should receive her in battle formation in the open country with 50 light cavalry horses.⁵¹

Many descriptions of the celebrations for the entries of Barbara and Giovanna into their respective cities were published and widely circulated, including such events, or in this case, non-event, as the banquet to be held in celebration of Barbara's wedding at the palace of her brother in law, the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, a banquet that in the end had to be cancelled due to the sudden death of the Pope Pius IV.⁵² The custom of publishing the accounts of wedding festivities was a traditional one in Italy: Cosimo himself had had published the description of the celebrations to commemorate his own marriage to Eleonora de Toledo,⁵³ and Domenico Mellini's account of Giovanna's entry and the festivities undertaken for the wedding was also printed by his order.⁵⁴ The descriptions would perhaps have been bought by those who attended the festivities, perhaps as keep-sakes of the event. They also unofficially served as detailed explanations of how to set up a festive entry. For example the German diary kept by a member of the entourage of Prince Ferdinand of Bavaria, who represented his father Albrecht V and his mother Anna at the wedding of his maternal aunt Giovanna, was organised with an eye for detail. The diary included a set-piece description of the entry, which would, no doubt, have been circulated at the Bavarian court upon his return and contributed to the diffusion of Italian-style festivities north of the Alps.⁵⁵

Both women entered their cities in triumphal cortèges. But while Giovanna came riding upon a horse, Barbara was borne upon a litter, perhaps an indication of her weaker constitution; certainly she was sickly for most of her short time in Ferrara, and was only well enough to visit Modena, the second city in her duchy, a full three years later in 1568. A description of her entry into Modena has survived in the archives and the triumphal arches that were set up give a clear picture of the significance of the match and the role and interests the Duchess was expected to undertake.⁵⁶ As well as an arch glorifying the magnificent House of Habsburg, there was an arch erected to

⁵¹ 'La scelta della Banda di Mugello et del Pont'a Sieve, che la riceversero in battaglia in campagna con 50 cavalli leggeri'. ASF, MdP 6355/A, p. 7r.

⁵² Giacomo Grana, *Convito Estense preparato e descritto da Giacomo Grana Ferrarese* (Ferrara, 1843).

⁵³ Pietro Francesco Giambullari, *Apparato et feste nelle noze dello illustrissimo signor Duca di Firenze, et della Duchessa sua consorte: con le sue stanze, madriali, comedia, & intermedii, in quelle recitati* (Florence: Benedetto Giunta, 1539).

⁵⁴ Mellini, *Descrizione dell'entrata*.

⁵⁵ See M.A. Katritzky, 'The Florentine Entrata of Joanna of Austria and other Entrate described in a German Diary', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 59 (1996), 148-73.

⁵⁶ ASMO, ASE, Casa e Stato 358, Fascicolo 37/1990 (unpaginated).

‘religious devotion’ and an arch dedicated to ‘the moral virtues’; after her death, Barbara was celebrated by Torquato Tasso in precisely these terms.⁵⁷

In all three Archduchesses’ cases, the wedding festivities marked their transition from Habsburg Archduchesses to Medici, Este and Gonzaga wives, and they were expected to adapt quickly and uncompromisingly to their new positions. In the following chapters I will discuss their willingness and ability to adapt and the choices they made in constructing their position and identities.

Dynastic Ambitions

The wedding celebrations highlight the importance of the Habsburg union for all three Italian families, but these marriages also represented a new strategic policy for the Medici and the Este. Up to this point, the Este dynasty (Appendix 1) had been mostly loyal to the French crown,⁵⁸ but the disastrous marriage of Alfonso’s father, Ercole II, with Renée de France⁵⁹ had soured the family’s relationship with both France and the Pope. Alfonso, still heirless, was facing the threat of his duchy being reclaimed by the Roman See on his death. Ferrara, like Urbino, was held by the Este as a papal *feudum*; therefore, according to feudal law, if there was no male heir, the territory reverted to the feudal overlord, i.e. the Pope, to dispose of as he saw fit. This did eventually take place after Alfonso’s death, when Ferrara was seized by the Pope.⁶⁰

France, still recovering from the defeat suffered at the hands of the Spanish Habsburgs and disabled by the internal turmoil between Catholics and Protestants that would erupt in 1572 with the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, was no longer a useful ally. The Emperor could perhaps help to combat the Pope’s ambitions,⁶¹ and the alliance

⁵⁷ *Le prose diverse di Torquato Tasso*, ed. by Cesare Guasti (Florence: Le Monnier, 1875).

⁵⁸ As a young man, just after his first marriage to Eleonora de’Medici, Alfonso had been sent by his father, Ercole II, to live at the French court, while his sister, Anna d’Este, had been married off to François de Lorraine, the Duke of Guise. Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, p. 316. However, at the same time the Este had tried to keep a balance and avoid alienating the emperor through tactics such as sending the Duke Ercole II’s brother Francesco to fight at the head of imperial troops. Luciano Chiappini, *La corte estense alla metà del Cinquecento: i compendi di Cristoforo di Messisbugo* (Ferrara: Belriguardo, 1984), p. 10.

⁵⁹ Renée had openly displayed Calvinist sympathies and had ended up banished from court amid fears that she was corrupting her children. See Gorris, ‘D’un chateau à l’autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara (1528-1560)’. Alfonso’s relations with her remained strained throughout his life, but Barbara appears to have been on good terms with her mother-in-law, writing and receiving several letters.

⁶⁰ The remaining members of the Este family then retreated to the city of Modena, was a *feudum* of the Empire and therefore safe from the Pope, which is why the family archives are kept there, rather than in Ferrara. Romolo Quazza, ‘Alfonso II d’Este’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1960), pp. 337-41 (pp. 340-41).

⁶¹ There was also an ongoing legal wrangle between the Este and the Pope for control over the extraction of salt from the Comacchio area, in the province of Ferrara. Carcereri, *Cosimo primo*, p. 165.

might also serve to assuage Rome's anger over Renée, thanks to the active Catholicism of Barbara. The Emperor's favour was also sought in order to assert the Este family's high rank in Italy and to gain a powerful ally against the pro-Medici Pope in the increasingly bitter dispute over precedence. Marriage with a lady of royal blood, for Barbara had a claim, through her mother, to the title of Queen of Bohemia and Hungary, was an important coup for this small but ambitious duchy.⁶²

Florence on the other hand, had its main alliance with the Spanish Habsburgs, rather than with France, thanks to Charles V's investiture of Cosimo as Duke of Florence in September 1537, and Cosimo's marriage in 1539 to Eleonora de Toledo, daughter of the Spanish Viceroy of Naples (Appendix 1).⁶³ However, Cosimo knew that to achieve his aim of elevation to the status of Grand Duke, he would also need the support of the Austrian side of the family: Ferdinand and his sons.⁶⁴ He also aimed to launch the Medici onto the European political stage and to do so he needed to find his son Francesco a suitable consort from outside Italy. He himself had attempted at first to marry the natural daughter of Charles V, Margherita d'Austria, the widow of Alessandro de'Medici, but had been refused. Now, however, he was powerful and wealthy enough to aim higher, attempting a direct, legitimate connection with the house of Habsburg. The aspirational nature of this marriage and the relative rankings, in terms of status, between Medici and Habsburgs, is exemplified by the fact that Maximilian II would not even permit direct correspondence with Francesco, until the latter had received the title of Duke.⁶⁵ This was one of the reasons why Cosimo formally renounced his post as head of government, in favour of Francesco, in order to give the latter the status that would support his marriage bid.⁶⁶ However, the Habsburgs were prepared to overlook the Medici's relatively recently acquired noble credentials – Cosimo was, after all, the scion of an obscure cadet branch of the original Medici line,

⁶² As Carcereri points out, it became an absolutely necessary step for the Este Duke once the news reached him that the Medici were attempting to obtain an imperial bride for the young heir Francesco, a tactic which, if he had not done the same, would have assured them the upper hand in the struggle for precedence. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁶³ Elena Fasano Guarini, 'Cosimo I de'Medici', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1984), pp. 30-48 (pp. 34-35).

⁶⁴ He also hoped to have his authority over Siena officially confirmed, and even perhaps achieve control over Lucca, aims he might achieve with the support of an imperial father-in-law for his son. Carcereri, *Cosimo primo*, p. 158, and Saltini, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 74.

⁶⁵ The letter from the Emperor Maximilian II, asking Francesco in the future to always sign himself *Prince of Tuscany* indicates the perceived necessity of upgrading the dignity of the Medici family in order to make them worthy of an imperial bride. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo II, p. 44. See also Leuzzi, 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze' (pp. 237-38).

⁶⁶ The renunciation took place in Spring 1564, *Ibid.*, p. 237.

once certain adjustments had been made, in view of their wealth and generosity. The Emperor Maximilian II had inherited huge debts from his father Ferdinand, and early in June 1565, he sent envoys to Mantua, Ferrara and Florence to negotiate loans. Cosimo was the only one to collaborate willingly, and arranged payments of 200,000 *scudi*.⁶⁷ This prompt service solidly tied the Habsburgs to the Medici and had an enormous impact on Giovanna's later standing in Florence.

The Gonzaga had already been awarded the title of Dukes by Charles V and were also closely allied to the Emperor (Appendix 1);⁶⁸ however, at this time a marital connection with the Habsburgs was especially expedient as Guglielmo wished to secure his grip on Monferrato. He had acquired this through his mother Margherita Paleologa, but it proved difficult to control as the leading families in the territory were extremely hostile to Guglielmo and sought French protection against him.⁶⁹ Guglielmo needed imperial support to quell any rebellion. An example of the Duke's amicable relations with the Emperor can be found in a letter from Ferdinand, dating to 1560, in which he informed Guglielmo that he would keep him abreast of any complaints against him made by citizens of Casale.⁷⁰ In order to further cement this relationship, and offset the political danger posed by the Duke Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy, whom the feudal nobles of Casale were also petitioning to get rid of Guglielmo, the Duke of Mantua eagerly pursued marriage with one of the Emperor's daughters.⁷¹ Furthermore, Guglielmo also aspired to raise Monferrato to a duchy, and to acquire for himself the title of '*Altezza*', already possessed by his rival Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy. Just as for Cosimo, the key to prestigious titles and international status was seen to reside in the hands of the Emperor; however, in Guglielmo's case, although he was given the title of

⁶⁷ Carcereri, *Cosimo primo*, pp. 180-83.

⁶⁸ An indication of this closeness is provided by a letter from Cardinal Ercole to the Emperor Charles V, in response to the latter's gratitude for the role played by the Cardinal at the papal conclave: 'ho sempre desiderato che ella [Charles V] sola è padrona di me et quella che mi può assolutamente comandare...' (I have always wished for you [Charles V] alone to be my lord and [for you] to be the one to command me in everything...), *Mantova: la storia*, ed. by Leonardo Mazzoldi, Renato Giusti and Rinaldo Salvadori (Mantua: Istituto Carlo D'Arco per la storia di Mantova, 1963), III, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷¹ A letter dated to 1560 from Guglielmo to his brother Lodovico highlights the practicality that characterised noble marriages of the period: 'ho accettato quella che da parte della Cesarea Maestà [Ferdinand I] mi è stata proposta, cioè Leonora, quale è la seconda delle sei figliole di Sua Maestà, et di cui mi sodisfaccio in ogni cosa eccetto che nel tempo, perche invero ella ne è piu fornita che non son io [she was 27], di tre anni e meglio.' (I have accepted the one offered to me by His Majesty, i.e. Leonora, who is the second of His Highness' six daughters. And I am satisfied with everything except her age, as she is older than I am by three years or more). ASM, AG 200, Fascicolo I, Rubrica 17, p. 101.

Duke of Monferrato, he was never awarded the title of Grand Duke, which may have contributed towards his difficult relationship with Florence.⁷²

These were the primary political reasons for the matches arranged between the Habsburg, Este, Medici and Gonzaga families.⁷³ The three Archduchesses were, therefore, dispatched to their new courts, and expected to swiftly adapt to them, despite the barriers presented by both language and culture. Their immersion brought them into contact with different ideas about how a court should be run, about how it had been run by the women who preceded them, and what was now expected of them. They also encountered the other women in the ruling families. The final section of this chapter will provide a short introduction to the nature of the courts in which the young Habsburg sisters found themselves and the people who resided there.

Barbara and Ferrara

When Barbara arrived at the court of Ferrara in December 1565, she found two other female members of the Este family already in residence. Her sisters-in-law Leonora and Lucrezia were established presences at court throughout Barbara's life. They had had undergone a rigorous academic education under the guidance of their mother Renée,⁷⁴ they were cultured and considered beautiful by contemporary chroniclers and were active in all the pursuits of the court.⁷⁵ In this they were joined by an array of other lovely and accomplished court ladies, such as the Bendidio sisters, one of whom,

⁷² *Mantova: la storia*, ed. by Mazzoldi, Giusti and Salvadori, pp. 23-24.

⁷³ Of the fifteen children born to Ferdinand and Anna, two died before reaching adulthood, three became nuns (Magdalene, Margareta and Helena), the eldest daughter, Elisabeth, married the King of Poland, Sigismund II, who married, after Elisabeth's death, her sister Katharina, the widow of the Duke Francesco III Gonzaga, Guglielmo's elder brother. The second daughter, Anna, married Albrecht V, Duke of Bavaria and another daughter, Maria, married Wilhelm, Duke of Jülich-Cleves-Berg. The eldest son, Maximilian II, married his cousin Maria of Spain, while his brother Ferdinand married Philippine Welser in an unusual love match, and then his niece, Eleonora's daughter Anna Caterina in 1580. The last surviving brother, Karl, married his sister Anna's daughter, Maria Anna of Bavaria.

⁷⁴ Floriana Calitti, 'Leonora d'Este', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1993), pp. 380-83 (pp. 380-81), describes how they studied authors ranging from Aristotle to Euclid.

⁷⁵ Leonora, however, suffered from constant ill health, and was often considered to be on the point of death. For a biography of her life and those of her siblings, see Giuseppe Campori and Angelo Solerti, *Luigi, Lucrezia e Leonora d'Este. Studi di G. Campori e Angelo Solerti* (Turin: Ermanno Loescher, 1888).

Isabella, was bequeathed the sum of 400 *scudi* by Barbara in her will,⁷⁶ while the other, Lucrezia, much appreciated for her beautiful voice, was courted by Torquato Tasso.⁷⁷

Barbara was the second wife of Alfonso, although his first wife, Lucrezia de' Medici, had not lasted long in the insalubrious air of Ferrara, surrounded by waters and the malaria-bearing mosquitoes that infested them. Prior to Lucrezia, the Duchess had been Renée of France. Renée's court had been composed almost entirely of French rather than Ferrarese courtiers. She had refused to integrate into the Italian speaking world, and conducted her affairs entirely in her own language.⁷⁸ She had been increasingly drawn to Calvinism, much to the dismay of her husband, who reacted by isolating her from her children and from the court until she agreed to follow, at least outwardly, Catholic rituals and teachings.⁷⁹ After her husband's death, her relationship with her son, Alfonso, was strained and difficult. She was finally forced out of Ferrara and sought refuge back in her native France, in the castle of Montargis. The problems Renée caused her husband and later her son may have contributed to the tight control Alfonso maintained over Barbara's activities.

Renée's two daughters, who were left in Ferrara at her departure, each had a small court of their own, financed by the central court treasury.⁸⁰ When Lucrezia had been Duchess and Alfonso had journeyed outside the duchy, it was the latter's sister Leonora who ruled Ferrara in his absence, not his wife, which indicates the powerful position the sisters held at court.⁸¹ Nevertheless, there is evidence to support the idea that during Alfonso's absences it was Barbara rather than Leonora who ruled in his stead.⁸² The reasons for this change will be discussed in chapter three.

⁷⁶ This must be compared with the sums given to the German ladies, which went from 700 up to 2,000 *scudi* as I will discuss in chapter three (See Appendix 2).

⁷⁷ For information on the lives of some of these 'dame di corte', see Angelo Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense nella seconda metà del secolo decimosesto* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1891), pp. lxvi-lxxv.

⁷⁸ Her *livres des comptes*, or account books, are kept in the archive in Turin, Gorris, 'D'un chateau à l'autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara (1528-1560)' (pp. 141-42).

⁷⁹ Gisella Castagnari, *Alcuni nuovi studi su Lucrezia d'Este, duchessa d'Urbino* (Florence: Carnesecchi e figli, 1905), pp. 16-18, and Mario Roffi, 'Un concorso di poesia francese a Ferrara alla corte estense di Renata di Francia', in *The Renaissance in Ferrara and its European Horizons*, ed. by J. Salmons and W. Moretti (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1984), pp. 263-69 (p. 264).

⁸⁰ Campori and Solerti, *Luigi, Lucrezia e Leonora d'Este*, p. 94, pinpoints a document dating to 1569, which lists Leonora's household, made up of ten people. The *Bolletta dei Salariati* in the Este archive in Modena indicates that they were in receipt of monthly payments, just as Barbara was, although they received 770 *lire* to her 2,160 *lire*. See for example ASMo, Camera Ducale Estense, Computisteria, *Bolletta dei Salariati* 70 (year 1569), pp. 1r, 2v.

⁸¹ Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense*, p. xxxvi.

⁸² Modena, Biblioteca Estense, *Lettere Autografe* (Manoscritti Italiani 1820), Collocazione β 1.2.2, Fascicolo 80462, p. 156.

The Este had ruled over Ferrara for over two centuries. Alfonso himself was extremely proud of his lineage, as evinced by his gift of his family tree to the Emperor,⁸³ and, unlike the Medici in Florence, he sought to emphasise the quasi-regal nature of his position. This is exemplified by the description of his investiture as Duke as a carefully choreographed event that emphasised his status. Alfonso sat enthroned, dressed in ermine and with a crown upon his head, and received the sword and sceptre from the man chosen to communicate the will of the people to have him as their Duke. He then rode upon a white stallion, arrayed in silver, in a splendid procession through the city, a practice that had not been in use amongst his predecessors.⁸⁴ Alfonso also appears to have prided himself on his manners, as evidenced in the description of a banquet by the Count of San Secondo. The Count reported on the lengthy procedure of hand-washing, where each Archduchess was expected to wash her hands in turn, according to her age, and the problems created by the actions of the visiting Duke of Ferrara, who refused to allow himself to be outdone in courtesy and would not agree to wash his hands first.⁸⁵ This courtesy and attention to etiquette may have eased Barbara's transition from the Habsburg court, which was also dominated by a strict code of conduct based on clear differentiations due to age and rank. In this respect she was luckier than her sister Giovanna.

Florence and Giovanna

When Giovanna arrived in Florence, the court of the Medici was still relatively newly established, compared to those of Ferrara and Mantua. Amongst the family members in residence, Duke Cosimo was still an active presence. Although he preferred to spend most of his time in Pisa rather than at the central Florentine court, he was in constant contact with Francesco and his administrators, receiving visitors, advising his son, and manoeuvring to obtain the grand-ducal crown. Also in Florence was Francesco's sister Isabella de' Medici Orsini, and occasionally his sister in law, Eleonora (or Leonora) di Toledo, although the latter mostly resided with Cosimo in Pisa. Both women were lively and considered cultured by their contemporaries, and Isabella especially enjoyed relative independence from her husband Paolo Giordano Orsini, whose main residence

⁸³ Leuzzi, 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze' (p. 239). This had, according to the Florentine envoys, made a poor impression in comparison to the richness of the gifts bestowed by Francesco.

⁸⁴ Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara*, pp. 13-15. Also Ernesto Milano, 'Casa d'Este dall'anno Mille al 1598', in *Gli Estensi prima parte: la corte di Ferrara*, ed. by Roberta Iotti (Modena: Il Bulino, 1997), pp. 9-93 (p. 77).

⁸⁵ ASF, MdP 516/A, p. 933.

was in Rome. Both women were also eventually murdered by their husbands for their alleged infidelity.⁸⁶ The brutality of these events had a profound impact on Giovanna and influenced her actions during the latter stages of her marriage. However, prior to these events, Francesco had already demonstrated his own intractable nature by confining his step-mother Camilla Martelli in the Convent of the Murate in Florence after Cosimo's death, whence she was allowed out only once, for her daughter Virginia's wedding,⁸⁷ and then upon Francesco's death, by which time she was widely reported to have gone mad.⁸⁸ Amongst all these figures, however, the main person that Giovanna had to confront during her time in Florence, was her rival Bianca Cappello, a Venetian noblewoman who had eloped with a young Florentine merchant, Pietro Buonaventura, and had come to Florence, where she had attracted the notice of Francesco. Bianca gained ever increasing power and influence in Florence due to her relationship with the Duke and remained at his side throughout his marriage to the Austrian Archduchess. The affair eventually culminated in his marriage to her a mere two months after Giovanna's death.⁸⁹

Giovanna therefore found herself uprooted from life in Innsbruck, and set in a court that was still in its infancy and marred by episodes of increasing violence. While the Habsburgs had long encouraged the nobility contained within the Habsburg dominions to come to the central courts, whether imperial or archducal, in order to become courtiers and dependent on Habsburg patronage,⁹⁰ the court that Giovanna first entered in 1565 had a very different atmosphere. Unlike the seigniorial relationships that governed the dynastic principalities scattered around Italy, Florence still felt strongly about its recent Republican past, and the local nobility were not yet conditioned to aim for roles at court. They belonged to urban mercantile families actively engaged in

⁸⁶ See Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, and Bramanti, *Breve vita di Leonora di Toledo*.

⁸⁷ Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 260. The Ferrarese ambassadors Rodolfo Conegrani and Ercole Cortile both report Camilla's entry into the Convent, although with differing levels of drama. The first reports that Camilla had entered the convent, and had been allowed to keep her jewels and belongings, although, he adds, an inventory had been taken of all her jewellery, while the second asserts that she was accompanied there by the police, as though she were a criminal and had gone mad from fright. ASMo, *Ambasciatori Italiani a Firenze* 23, Fascicolo 7, letter dated 24 April 1574, and 24, Fascicolo 11, letter dated 8 February 1575.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-62.

⁸⁹ Despite the protests of both Giovanna and Francesco's father, Cosimo, Bianca enjoyed a very public relationship with the Duke – only forced to leave court for a short while when Giovanna finally produced a longed-for male heir in 1577. As noted in the introduction, there are several biographies of Bianca, most of which follow Saltini, *Bianca Cappello*.

⁹⁰ Fichtner, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 19.

their own businesses.⁹¹ The Medici family had only recently left their private residence on the Via Larga with Cosimo's marriage to Eleonora. Under Cosimo's guidance, they took care not to be seen as overly ostentatious. Palazzo Pitti, although bought by Eleonora de Toledo, was not permanently inhabited by the Medici family until the death of Francesco, and the exterior of Palazzo Vecchio, which Cosimo and Eleonora had made their official residence, kept its traditional aspect, in order to minimise the impact of the take-over of the seat of Republican government by the Medici family.⁹² Cosimo was also careful to avoid excessive pomp in his dress and, unlike the Emperors, who wore the Spanish court dress, a black costume enlivened by gold embroidery, red hose and shoes,⁹³ he adopted more sober clothing in his everyday life. He favoured, as did his wife, colours which could convey humility such as brown and grey, although always enriched with embroidery in gold or silver. This lack of pomp and the unwillingness to be seen to ostentatiously elevate the family above the other Florentine citizens is exemplified by the number of salaried dependents at the Medici court. Cosimo in 1564 had 168 dependents, while Francesco, at his death, had 233.⁹⁴ This must be seen in relation to the 300 personal staff that the Emperor Ferdinand employed, and the circa 500 at the court of his son Maximilian II, who came to the throne in 1564.⁹⁵ The courts of Ferrara and Mantua, belonging to older and more well-established ducal families, also compare more closely with that of the Emperor than did Florence. There were 480 people in the Ferrarese court of Alfonso II d'Este in 1598, and 529 in Guglielmo's son Vincenzo Gonzaga's court in 1595.⁹⁶ The Venetian ambassadors also provide evidence of the peculiar nature of the Medici court; Vincenzo Fedeli described Cosimo in 1561:

The Duke, just as he is great in managing and governing the State, used also to be magnificent in all things; but for a while now he has been much more retiring, and as

⁹¹ Both Francesco and Ferdinand did begin to employ this method, however. An example is Francesco's decision to oblige those who received a stipend from him to reside at court. ASMo, Ambasciatori 24, Fascicolo 11, letter dated 22 May 1575.

⁹² When Francesco became Duke at Cosimo's death he still had to go through a formal ceremony of election as Duke of the Florentine Republic by the Members of the Council of the Forty-Eight, even though, the Ferrarese ambassador, points out, he was at pains to emphasise that he agreed to do so as a concession to the people of Florence, rather than an obligation. ASMo, Ambasciatori 23, Fascicolo 7, letter dated 24 April 1574.

⁹³ Jeroen Duindam, 'The Archduchy of Austria and the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary: The Courts of the Austrian Habsburgs c.1500-1750', in *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500-1750*, ed. by John Adamson (London: Cassell & Co, 2000), pp. 165-87 (p. 175).

⁹⁴ Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 30.

⁹⁵ Fichtner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 143; and Duindam, 'The Courts of the Austrian Habsburgs c.1500-1750' (p. 168).

⁹⁶ Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 30.

regards his home-life, he lives not like a prince, with that exquisite grandeur that other princes and dukes employ, but as a very great *pater familias*, and he always eats together with his wife and his children, with only a moderately adorned table; nor do the children have their own table or undertake expenditures on their own account, as they do in other courts, but rather it is all one set of accounts and one court alone...⁹⁷

This quote gives a clear view of Cosimo's policy: to be publicly splendid, as the chosen representative of Florence, but to be seen to live as a citizen rather than a prince in his private life. Cosimo and Eleonora followed a common policy seeking to maintain and expand Medici power by aggrandizing Florence rather than themselves. As the Medici family shored up their political hegemony, Francesco did begin to seek the trappings of the traditional princely court, and indeed by 1579, a year after Giovanna's death, his court had grown to an extent sufficient for the Venetian ambassadors to report that Francesco was served 'in the same way as other, greater, princes'.⁹⁸ However, Tommaso Contarini's words in 1588 that Ferdinand I de' Medici, a year on from his coronation, had further 'enlarged and expanded the court, to a far greater extent than before'⁹⁹ indicate that Francesco's court was still built on the pattern established by his father.

Giovanna, the daughter, sister and aunt of Emperors and Queens may well have perceived this transition to more informal arrangements and a small court as a loss of rank and this in turn will have influenced her attempts to assert her identity and select her allegiances.

Mantua and Eleonora

The Duke of Mantua, Guglielmo Gonzaga, small and hunchbacked, has been characterised for posterity perhaps more negatively than accurately, as a miserly bigot.¹⁰⁰ There are, however, certain foundations for this caricature: the Duke's parsimony is highlighted in the 1566 report by Vincenzo Tron, one of the Venetian

⁹⁷ 'Il Duca così come è grande nel maneggio e nel governo dello Stato, così già solea usare tutte le grandezze in tutte le cose; ma da un tempo in qua è molto rimesso e ritirato, e nelle cose della casa non vive invero da principe con quelle grandezze esquisite che sogliano usare gli altri principi o duchi, ma vive come un grandissimo padre di famiglia, e mangia sempre unitamente con la moglie e con i suoi figliuoli, con una tavola moderatamente ornata; nè li figli fanno da sè tavola, nè altra spesa come s'usa nelle altre corti, ma tutta è una spesa ed una sola corte...'. *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, ed. by Eugenio Alberi, II (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 1839), I, pp. 351-52.

⁹⁸ Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Paola Besutti, 'Guglielmo Gonzaga', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 2003), pp. 1-10 (pp. 4-5).

ambassadors, which declared that the Duke was very careful in his own expenditure and kept a tight rein on the expenses of his wife.¹⁰¹ There is no doubt that Guglielmo was an able and astute ruler. Under his guidance the Gonzaga family gained the title of Duke of Monferrato in 1574, although Guglielmo never achieved the rank of Grand Duke, a bitter disappointment especially considering Cosimo's success in that area. He was not, however, solely directed towards accumulating money and power. Guglielmo was a passionate devotee of music, and his court was home to numerous writers, playwrights and musicians, including Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina.¹⁰²

Unlike Florence and Ferrara, Mantua still had a Dowager Duchess when Eleonora arrived. Margherita Paleologa retained an influential position, governing Casale for Guglielmo.¹⁰³ She appears to have had a very cordial relationship with her daughter-in-law, sending her gifts of soap and thanking her for the portrait of her little son Vincenzo, whom she asks Eleonora to kiss and hug for her.¹⁰⁴ The presence of a Dowager Duchess in Mantua had a considerable impact on Eleonora's activities and financial situation. Eleonora in her own turn outlived her husband and became Dowager Duchess of Mantua. She continued in Margherita's footsteps, preserving a good relationship with her son and his successor, Vincenzo Gonzaga and his wife, Giovanna's daughter Eleonora. Unlike the Duchess of Florence, Eleonora and Guglielmo appear to have enjoyed a cordial relationship. They lived in far less physical proximity to each other than the Medici family in Florence and during the summer the Duchess often lived on her own in her villa at Porto.¹⁰⁵ Her encomiast, the Jesuit Antonio Possevino, also wrote that she came to an agreement with Guglielmo that after giving birth to her three children, including the all-important male heir, she could remain chaste.¹⁰⁶ Whether this was accurate or not, it was a far cry from Giovanna's situation, where she was pregnant every 18 months until her death in childbirth. The

¹⁰¹ We can find an example of his parsimony in a letter from Aurelio Zibramonti to the Gonzaga castellan in which he discusses the arrangements for the stay of Renée de Lorraine and relays Guglielmo's advice to Eleonora to make such arrangements as might be necessary, but 'con manco spesa che potrà' (with the least expense possible). Daniela Sogliani, *Le collezioni Gonzaga* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana, 2002), p. 401.

¹⁰² Besutti, 'Guglielmo Gonzaga' (pp. 6-7).

¹⁰³ Margherita's husband, Federico Gonzaga, had died in 1540 from syphilis. She and her two brothers-in-law, Ercole and Ferrante Gonzaga, took over the regency for her son Francesco, and after his death, for Guglielmo, who took over from the regents in 1556. Ibid. (p. 1).

¹⁰⁴ ASM, AG 2141 bis, pp. 864, 868, 905.

¹⁰⁵ Eleonora was left the palace and gardens of Porto by Margherita Paleologa in her will. ASM, AG 332, Rubrica 2, unpaginated.

¹⁰⁶ Possevino, *Vita et morte della serenissima Eleonora*, p. 60.

impact these factors may have had on the Duchesses' activities will be considered in more detail in the following chapters.

The three Habsburg Archduchesses, having grown up together in a single court, now found themselves in three very different cities, and in courts that were actively competing against each other for dominance and the titles of nobility that the Emperor and the Papacy could bestow. They also faced different degrees of rivalry within their own courts, as in all three cases, they were not the only high-ranking women at court. The Duchesses faced competition for patronage and potential challengers for the role of first lady and the following chapters will discuss in further detail the effects of their individual situations on their consumption and gift-giving choices, and their patronage activities.

Sisters, Brothers-in-law and Political Rivalries

The sisters maintained their relationships with each other after their arrival in Italy, as their correspondence indicates, but they were not unaffected by the political rivalries of their new families. As discussed above, it is difficult to gauge the extent of the influence of the hostility between the Medici and the Este on the relationship between Barbara and Giovanna. These two Duchesses certainly appear to have been far closer and warmer in their relationships with Eleonora than with each other. There are collections of letters from both of them addressed to Eleonora and it is to her that Giovanna appealed for advice and help over her marital troubles with Francesco.¹⁰⁷ Barbara, moreover, left a reliquary and various other precious objects to Eleonora in her will, and asked that her husband provide Eleonora's German ladies with appropriate legacies.¹⁰⁸ She left nothing, on the other hand, to Giovanna and her ladies. The fact that Barbara chose to make bequests to her sister's German ladies-in-waiting as well as her own suggests that links were maintained not only between the sisters, but also between the women of their courts. The Gonzaga and the Este Houses appear to have collaborated against their common Medici rivals.¹⁰⁹ It may also have been important that the two duchies were geographically closer. This enabled Eleonora, for example, to visit Barbara and to stay there during the latter's final illness and death. This indicates that it

¹⁰⁷ ASF, MdP 5926, p. 167 is a letter from Eleonora advising Giovanna not to rock the marital boat, and to behave as a wise princess should.

¹⁰⁸ ASMo, ASE, Sezione Casa e Stato 358, Fascicolo 37/1990.

¹⁰⁹ An example of this solidarity may be seen in Guglielmo's decision to place the Este arms over those of the Medici upon Giovanna's visit to Mantua on her journey down to Florence. See note 44.

was far easier for Barbara and Eleonora to sustain a close personal relationship than Barbara and Giovanna, who were physically as well as politically divided.

Political rivalries between their spouses may have exacerbated the limited affection between Barbara and Giovanna but their personal relationship may have already been strained even before their marriages took place. The report sent by the Count of San Secondo that Giovanna did not seem distressed at Barbara's departure from Trent is indicative of this coolness.¹¹⁰ Also highly revealing is the letter Barbara sent to her future husband Alfonso in September 1565; here she expressed her strong desire for her sister Eleonora to be present at her wedding, but the wording regarding the invitation extended to Giovanna is very different:

As I greatly desire that the most Serene Lady Duchess of Mantua, my sister, be present at our wedding, and fear that perhaps that the Lord Duke will not let her come, I beg Your Excellency to consent to invite both of them, so that she may not have cause to excuse herself as not being invited; furthermore Your Excellency will know how, since Sir Luigi Gonzaga asked me a few days ago amongst other things to invite the Lady Giovanna, my sister, I have done as you wished. She thanks you but says that she is not free to accept and will submit to the wishes of her Lord husband.¹¹¹

Barbara's words 'dovesse invitare' and the tone of Giovanna's response, first an outright refusal, then the ambiguous answer that she would do as her spouse desired, hints that the two sisters did not get on.

Nonetheless, Barbara's invitation and the response to it was directly influenced by the political rivalry between Francesco and Alfonso over precedence.¹¹² Certainly, there are other instances which indicate that the sisters incorporated the competition

¹¹⁰ See note 45.

¹¹¹ 'desiderando io grandemente che la serenissima signora duchessa di Mantua mia sorella fosse presente alle nostre nozze et dubitando che forse el signor duca non la lassara venir, prego Vostra Eccellenza sia contenta de invitarli tutti dui, acio non habbia causa de escusarsi del non venir per non esser stata invitata. Dipoi Vostra Eccellenza sapera como ne li passati giorni, havendomi il signor Luiggi gonzaga fra l'altre cosse da parte do quella ricercato che io dovesse invitare la signora giovanna mia sorella, feci quanto ello me disse, la quale molto de cio rengратиò Vostra Eccellenza ma, perche non e de sua liberta, disse che se rimetteva al voler del signor suo sposo...' (*in the rough copy there is a crossed out section that says: 'disse non poter accittarl'invito', then substituted with 'se rimetteva al voler del Signor suo sposo'*). ASMo, ASE, Sezione Casa e Stato 167, folder dated 1565, letter dated 20 September 1565.

¹¹² Alvise Contarini recounts that when Giovanna passed through Ferrarese territory on her way down to Florence for her wedding, although preparations had been made to receive and honour her, not only did she refuse to stay, but she even declined to stop and eat. *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, ed. by Angelo Ventura (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1976), I, p. 77. It is important to remember that Giovanna and her entourage were being accompanied by Medici allies and relatives; Cosimo had expressly forbidden Francesco from allowing Giovanna to go to Ferrara, and so the decision was never in Giovanna's hands. Nevertheless, it must still have had an effect on sisterly relationships.

between the two cities into their own relationship. Giovanna took the trouble to send one of her officials to inform the Medici envoy of the ill-mannered behaviour of the Ferrarese visitors to Innsbruck and the bad impression they had made,¹¹³ and when they were later established in their respective Duchies, Canigiani recounted to Francesco an incident that took place in March 1566, when one of Giovanna's ladies on a visit to Ferrara was asked what she thought of the *grandezze* of Barbara by a Ferrarese courtier. The lady replied, much to Canigiani's satisfaction, that Giovanna's ladies-in-waiting were grander and lived better than her sister's. Canigiani's tone is of definite triumph in recounting this event, and there seems to be no doubt that the princesses were encouraged in their rivalry.¹¹⁴

Despite these indications of the competitive nature of the relationship between Barbara and Giovanna, however, the presence of letters in the archives between the sisters, and especially between Eleonora and each of her two siblings, together with other documents such as Barbara's will, demonstrate that the connections between them were far from severed when they left their homeland. In the next chapter I will discuss the networks they set up between each other and their reliance on each other in order to extend patronage and assert their positions within their own courts. I will suggest that the nature of the female consort's position could necessitate transcending personal feelings and political rivalries in favour of providing mutual support.

¹¹³ ASF, MdP 516/A, p. 947.

¹¹⁴ ASF, MdP 2889, p. 155.

SECTION ONE

COURT NETWORKS

Introduction

The court was not only the residence of the ruler and his family, it was also the central nucleus of government, justice and the regulation of the territory under the dynasty's control.¹ In her work on Florence and the Medici, Natalie Tomas has described the shift from republican to princely rule, and the consequences for the female members of the Medici family in terms of their access to power.² She firmly locates their increasing influence in the transfer of authority from republican, all-male forums, to the private world of the palace, where women could participate by virtue of their identity as wives, sisters and daughters of the ruling dynasty. Tomas therefore pinpoints the court as a key factor in the analysis of female access to influence. However, her discussion focuses on the earliest period in the development of the seigniorial court, when the Medici wives were not yet in receipt of personal allowances, the court had not been subdivided into a system of separate male and female households, and consorts were usually selected from amongst the Florentine upper class. My own research analyses the impact of court structures on female influence at a later stage in the development of the seigniorial court, when marriages had become matters of international negotiation and wives could come from dramatically different socio-cultural backgrounds. I examine the parameters within which the consort could operate and access power, and the effect of these restrictions on her use of material culture. In order to understand how and why the female consort participated in gift-giving and chose to adopt or enforce particular styles of dress, it is essential to be aware of how her court worked, its relationship with the male court, the restrictions that could be imposed on the consort's control over her own person and her courtiers, and the avenues through which she might act independently. In this section I explore the composition of the Duchesses' courts, their relationships with and responsibilities towards their courtiers, and the variations in the resources at their disposal for accessing and wielding influence. This discussion will form the essential basis for my analysis of the female consort's acquisition, employment and distribution of objects as an alternative means through which she might achieve visibility.

¹ Bertelli, 'L'universo cortigiano' (pp. 7-8).

² Natalie Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

The basis of the seigniorial court was the household, comprised of all those who were bound by ties of patronage to provide its head with essential services and support.³ The female household included the ladies-in-waiting and gentlemen companions, but also those who held positions of practical responsibility, such as cooks, cellar assistants, footmen, a personal tailor, a washerwoman, a chaplain and others who supervised and undertook the daily running of the spiritual and material life of the duchess and her companions.⁴ Her household formed a small court of its own and until recently scholars have viewed it as a miniature replica of the male court:

Although these courts [those of the duchess and the various princes and princesses of the dynasty] did not enjoy the same political and social prestige as that of the duke, they replicated, on a smaller scale, the same organisational, economic and relational structure, and their members enjoyed the same legal rights and privileges as those of the duke.⁵

However, in this section I will demonstrate that in practice the duchess' court was not an independent network and it did not benefit from the same economic and relational structures as the male court. Guido Guerzoni and Guido Alfani have emphasised in their article on the court of Ferrara,

The duke was not only head of his household, he was also absolute ruler of his state and head of the house of Este...⁶

As a consequence, the female consort found herself in the peculiar position of being both subordinate to the duke, while also head of her own court. In the following chapters I will discuss the effects of this situation on her ability to control her own courtiers and to operate independently; I will compare the courts of these three Duchesses and analyse the factors, including ducal intervention, that might make one sister's court succeed while another failed. I will also address a further issue that ensued from the institutional differences between the position of the consort and that of her husband and had considerable impact upon her ability to exert independent authority. The duke, as well as running a household dedicated to the care of his person, also employed a large number of men whose task was to take care of the administration and government of the Duchy. However, while this both demonstrated and followed from

³ Guerzoni and Alfani, 'Court History and Career Analysis', (p. 9).

⁴ ASM, AG 395, Rubrica 5, Ruoli degli Ufficiali di Corte: 1567-1697, pp. 162-163.

⁵ Guerzoni and Alfani, 'Court History and Career Analysis', (p. 12).

⁶ Ibid., (p. 9).

the duke's clear and acknowledged role as a head of his state, the duchess's access to governmental authority could be severely limited.

Chapter Two

Eleonora

The composition of the female court

In almost all marriages contracted between ruling elites, the bride left her family and joined her husband in his country.¹ Throughout the early modern period, noblewomen played a vital role, circulating around the courts of Europe and constructing networks of alliances for their natal families that spread not only across the top levels of kings and high nobles, but permeated all of court society, as women brought members of their households with them as they settled in their new cities and countries. This in itself could be a threat to the ruler, who had no claims to their loyalty, and to the other courtiers who might not welcome rivals for the rewards and privileges offered at court. The paranoia relating to female consorts and their courts is powerfully illustrated by a rumour which circulated regarding Philip III of France's second wife Mary of Brabant in 1276. The story accuses her of poisoning Philip's son by his first wife:

It is said throughout Paris that Madam the young Queen and the ladies of her household who she brought with her from her own country, have poisoned and murdered Louis the King's son, and no one doubts as many people say that they will do the same, if they can, to the King's other children by his first wife, with the intention of ensuring that the children that this queen has and will have will be heirs to the kingdom of France.²

¹ A famous exception is Philip of Spain, who married Mary Tudor and became king-consort of England.

² 'L'en dit tout communement part tote la cité de Paris que madame la royne la jeune et les fames de son ostel lesqueles elle amena de son pais, empoisonerent et mistrent à mort mon seigneur Lois, le filz du roi, et si se doute l'en, si comme l'en dit communement, que eles ne facent autel, se eles puent, as autres enfanz le roi que il a de sa premiere fame, en cele entencion que li enfant que li rois a et aura de ceste roine soient hoir dou reaume de France.' Georges Minois, *Le couteau et le poison: l'assassinat politique en Europe (1400-1800)* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 21.

Alongside the traditional *topoi* of fear of poisoning, and of the ‘wicked, unmaternal woman’, there is clearly much anxiety about what one might call a coup d’état by the Queen and the ladies she brought with her from her own country, with whom she had formed a network outside male control. The ruler was fully aware of the potential conflict that could arise with an inimical court and might take increasingly aggressive steps to ensure his control over his wife’s actions and the members of her household. One way of effectively isolating the consort and ensuring that her relationships were formed under the guidance of her husband was by attempting to control the composition of her court at the start of her married life. The thorny question of who was allowed to accompany the bride and the composition of her court therefore arose frequently in marriage negotiations.

As previously discussed, Eleonora came down to Italy before her two sisters. The negotiations for her marriage were already taking place in 1560 and a body of letters dating to this period details the contest that took place between the Duke of Mantua, Guglielmo Gonzaga, and the Emperor, Ferdinand I, over the courtiers to be allocated to her.³ It appears from these letters that the future Duchess of Mantua had little or no command over who came with her to her new residence in Mantua, or at least her voice appears to be completely absent from the Gonzaga archives on this matter. During the marriage negotiations in 1560, Guglielmo wrote to his envoys at the imperial court in Vienna, saying that he would provide the service that his wife would have in Mantua, as had been done for his brother’s wife Katharina, Eleonora’s sister, at her marriage.⁴ In a letter of early 1561 back to Guglielmo regarding the negotiations taking place in Vienna, his emissary wrote that Eleonora would be accompanied by four ladies-in-waiting and the *matrona di camera*, but that Guglielmo would be able both to add to these at his pleasure, and to substitute his own choices when positions became vacant.⁵ However, a slightly later letter demonstrates that the matter was not definitively

³ ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo I, II.

⁴ Ibid., Fascicolo II, p. 135. ‘Circa al servizio che essa mia moglie haverà da haver qui in Mantova, le provederò io a mio modo, si come fu fatto anco alle sopradette nozze.’ (Regarding the staff that this wife of mine will have here in Mantua, I will arrange it in my way, as was done also for the above marriage [i.e. Francesco and Katharina Habsburg].)

⁵ Ibid., p. 157. ‘L’Imperatore ha detto a signore Conte di Luna [Guglielmo’s ambassador at the Court of the Emperor], et a me che non intende che siano in piu numero che la Matrona di Camera et quattro donzelle...ma che vacando queste, non si cura che in suo luogo si mettano di quelle che Vostra Eccellenza vorrà.’ (The Emperor has told the Count of Luna and myself that he does not mean them [i.e. Eleonora’s staff] to be more in number than the *Matrona di Camera* and four ladies-in-waiting...but when these positions become vacant, he doesn’t mind if Your Excellency puts in their place those whom Your Excellency desires.).

settled, as the Mantuan ambassador Cavriani wrote to Guglielmo that the Emperor was insisting on sending a certain Count of Zolner to be the head majordomo, the Count of Arco as head valet-de-chambre, the Count of Lodron as head master of the horse, and then all the other court officials, honourable gentlemen and barons.⁶ That this was considered unacceptable is proven by another letter, unfortunately undated, from Guglielmo to one of his negotiating team, saying that he would provide her service (i.e. those courtiers who would form her court) when she arrived, although he conceded that she might bring with her a pair of ladies-in-waiting, a pair of pages and a pair of footmen if she so wished.⁷ Last in the file is a bitter letter from Guglielmo complaining that none of his requests had been granted by the emperor:

We requested that her *family* (i.e. her household) should be assembled entirely from those here and it seems that they wish to take those from there.⁸

A struggle was clearly taking place over the allocation of courtiers to the Duchess' retinue. Apart from ensuring that the members of his wife's court were known and trusted, in this case an extra incentive for Guglielmo would have been the opportunity to reward his own followers, rather than the Emperor's, with positions in his wife's court. This would enable them to be paid either through the allowance he granted his wife or through general court funds. In either circumstance, it was far more advantageous to Guglielmo for courtiers loyal to the Gonzaga to be paid with Gonzaga money than to reward courtiers whose first loyalty was to the Habsburgs. Finances were a serious issue for the Mantuan Duke who was faced with having to replenish his treasury after the excessive expenditure of his predecessor, his brother Francesco III Gonzaga. Many of the letters addressed to his agents in Vienna mention his financial difficulties and ask for the Emperor's help in curtailing his expenditure for the wedding.

⁶ Ibid., p.170. 'Sua Maestà Cesarea ha deputato oltra l'elletto di Trento che accompagnara Sua Altezza che il Conte di Zolner venghi per Maiordomo maggiore... Il Conte Pirro d' Arco serà Cameriere maggiore, Il Conte Gaspar de Lodron Cavallerizzo maggiore, et tutti li altri ufficiali della Corte sono grandi et honorati Signori et Baroni.'

⁷ Ibid., p. 280. 'Che con lei da Trento in qua per grazia ch'io addimandi a Sua Cesarea Maestà non habbi da venire seco altri che un paio di Damiselle, dui paggi et altritanti staffieri i quali soli hanno da restar al suo servizio, provedendoli io di qua di Corte honorata per parte mia'. (That I ask His Majesty [Ferdinand I] that with her from Trent might come only a pair of ladies-in-waiting, two pages and the same number of footmen, who alone should remain in her service, I myself providing her with an honorable Court from here). This extract (from a draft letter) has a line through it, so the final missive may not have contained it, but it does indicate what Guglielmo hoped to ensure.

⁸ Ibid., p. 296. 'Si dimandava che la famiglia si facesse intiera tutta qui, et par se ne vuole menare di quelli di là...'

As a consequence of this struggle and the insistence upon the inclusion of Italian members within Eleonora's court,⁹ one of the key tasks the Duchess faced was the establishment of relationships with people whom she did not know and whose language she was unfamiliar with. Her courtiers might also have already belonged to previous courts, and established ties with other members of the ruling dynasty. In this context gift-giving was an essential tool in Eleonora's attempts to establish ties of loyalty and mutual benefit with those around her.

Adapting to Mantuan Court Life

Despite the good reports Guglielmo received of his future wife,¹⁰ she was still an 'alien', and as such, had different loyalties, different family ties and potentially conflicting ambitions. She might be a welcome ally, but she was also a representative of a foreign, perhaps competing or even inimical family. As a consequence it was considered imperative for the consort to be seen to openly abandon her previous state and embrace her new one. Guglielmo attempted to ensure that his wife would adopt Mantuan *mores* and integrate into her new environment. A letter from Cavriani to Guglielmo confirms this:

⁹ Eleonora's will, together with an encomium dedicated to her, and a document dated to 1582, indicate that some of her companions were Austro-German, such as the lady-in-waiting Giovanna Fogara, who served her for over forty-four years, but that she also employed a large number of courtiers of Italian extraction. One of these, Diana Borromea Brola, may have been part of her Italian mother-in-law's court, as there is mention of a 'magnifica Diana Borromea' in the 1567 series of inventories of Margherita Paleologa's estate. See Appendix 2; Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora*; ASM, AG 388, p. 75. See also Giovanni Battista Vigilio, 'La insalata: cronaca mantovana dal 1561 al 1602', ed. by Daniela Ferrari and Cesare Mozzarelli (Mantua, 1992), 39-40. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to reconstruct the ratio of Italian to German members of her court.

¹⁰ Guglielmo's envoy Annibale Cavriani provided a detailed description of Eleonora in a clear attempt to persuade Guglielmo to accept her rather than attempt to persuade the Emperor to give him Giovanna. Cavriani feared that such an attempt might irritate the Emperor and damage Guglielmo's chances of securing a favourable judgement in the dispute over the contested territory of Monferrato: 'Le condizioni dell'animo della Principessa Leonora, sono queste: è Catolica et Relligiosa, si diletta di lavorar', et di far' conditi per passar' il tempo, quando non ha che far'. Di natura amorevolissima, come si è potuto veder', che per non lasciar' la Principessa Maddalena sua sorella maggiore era risoluta di non si maritar'. Ma intendendo poi la volontà dell'Imperatore, si è rimessa al voler' di Sua Maestà. Queste altre sono quelle del corpo. È sana Dio gratia, di buon colore, Bianca et in somma Bella, quanto alcun'altra delle sorelle, eccetto l'ultima [Giovanna], la quale in questa età pare che sia un poco piu bella. Non è maggior' di persona di quello che sia la Principessa Barbara, et avenga che habbia non so che anni di più, non mostra però nella ciera di haver' più età.' (The character of the Princess Eleonora is as follows: she is catholic and religious, she enjoys working and making *conditi* [perhaps *canditi* – candied fruits are intended] to pass the time, when she has nothing to do. She is by nature exceedingly amiable, as one has seen, since she had decided not to marry in order not to abandon her older sister the Princess Magdalena. However, upon hearing the wishes of the Emperor, she submitted to his will. These are her physical characteristics. She is healthy, thanks be to God, with a good complexion, pale, and all in all as handsome as any of her sisters, except the youngest, who is, at this age, it seems a little prettier. She is no bigger than her sister the Princess Barbara, and although she is I do not know how much older, she does not look any older.). ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo II, pp. 153 r-v.

I should say that the Most Serene bride is about the same height as Madam's [Margherita Paleologa, Guglielmo's mother] Florentine lady without her shoes on; I couldn't get hold of one of her dresses without it being known, so I didn't want to try.¹¹ Regarding arranging her hair in the Italian style, she says that she doesn't want to try it now but at the appropriate time she will be happy to adopt the Italian fashion, but not before, as if she goes around with her head lightly covered then the cold will harm her.¹²

As figure 5 demonstrates, Eleonora was used to wearing a velvet beret. The focus seems to have been upon creating a sense of continuity in the eyes of the audience of courtiers and external observers; the interest in Eleonora's clothing also gives a clear indication of the importance of dress as a means of signalling identity. With Giovanna, as we shall see, there are eyewitness accounts that demonstrate her ambiguous behaviour in adopting first one style then another. In Eleonora's case, the above excerpt indicates at least a verbal agreement to conform when necessary, and there are other indications that she heeded her husband's wishes in the matter of her dress. However, the key issue I will discuss here is the effort invested in ensuring that the consort demonstrated her new loyalties and correctly conformed to the customs of her new environment.

An aid in adapting to their new lives may have been provided by the fact that consorts often arrived in courts where their predecessors were still established and could act as mentors and supports. In Eleonora's case, her mother-in-law, Margherita Paleologa was alive and active at her arrival and once the young Habsburg Archduchess had settled in, it appears that Margherita took on the role of instructing the new Duchess on her duties.¹³ These duties would have included, for example, the arrangement of marriages for the ladies in her court, such as Lucrezia von Sprinzenstein, for whom there is a note in the archive detailing a debt of 500 gold *scudi* taken on by Eleonora in order to supply her dowry:

On our side we declare and confess to be debtor to the Magnificent Girolamo Aldegati, our treasurer, for the sum of 500 gold scudi...on the 13th May 1562, which 500 scudi we have

¹¹ Presumably this was in order to have items of dress ready for her when she arrived.

¹² 'li dico che la Serenissima sposa e granda como e la fiorentina di Madama senza pantofole, non ho potuto haver una de le sue vesta senza farlo sapere perho non la ho voluta ricercar'. Del conzarsi la testa alla Italiana dice non voler' provar' qui ma che al bon tempo andara volontieri alla foggia Italiana, ma che pero non poscia per che como va leggiera che la testa per il freddo gli noce'. ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo II, p. 171.

¹³ Bellù, 'Le due Eleonore' (p. 158).

taken to give to the Magnificent Count Paolo di Hippoliti da Gazuoldo on behalf of the dowry of the Magnificent Lucretia von Prinzenstein our *cameriera*.¹⁴

There is also evidence from Eleonora's own correspondence that she in turn guided and supported her daughter-in-law Eleonora de' Medici when she arrived in Mantua as the bride of Vincenzo Gonzaga. This is suggested by letters present in the Mantuan archive which are signed by both women, in which they combine their intercessory powers on behalf of supplicants who have addressed letters to them both, and also send out orders to ducal servants, in this case the ambassador Pomponazzi in Venice, instructing him in financial matters.¹⁵ In this way the young Duchesses appear to have served a species of informal apprenticeship under the guidance of their predecessors – an arrangement which fostered a smooth transition and may have been helpful to both as the younger member was able to learn how to deal with the complexities of her new role and the elder was not forced out completely from her position in favour of the new arrival. This policy appears to also be reflected in the financial arrangements set in place for the Mantuan Duchesses who, as we shall see, were not immediately provided with their full provision, but spent their 'formative' years at court with a smaller allowance.

Exerting Influence and Extending Patronage: Intercessory Activities

As a new Duchess in a foreign court, Eleonora was faced with a series of duties and responsibilities as consort, head of the female court and as a patron in her own right. These responsibilities also gave her a voice and a level of public visibility that enabled her to exert a degree of power both within and without her immediate court environment. One of the main means at her disposal was interceding on behalf of courtiers and their families, as well as others for favours and positions.¹⁶ An example of such behaviour is the letter which she sent to Aurelio Zibramonti, the Mantuan ambassador in Rome, where she asked him to act in a judiciary case on behalf of a

¹⁴ 'In virtù delle presenti nostre Dechiariamo, et confessiamo esser' vera debitrice del Magnifico messer Girolamo Aldegati nostro Thesauriere de scudi cinque cento d'oro in oro...sotto il xiii di Gennaro M.D.lxii, li quali scudi 500 si sono pigliati per dare al Magnifico Conte Paolo di Hippoliti da Gazuoldo a conto della dote della Magnifica Lucretia Princestaina nostra camariera...'. ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo I, p. 104. The names of court members in all three Duchesses' courts present several variations in spelling. I have attempted wherever possible to provide the correct name, as in this case, and have otherwise provided the variant spelling that occurs most frequently.

¹⁵ ASM, AG 2152, p. 458 and 2153, p. 2.

¹⁶ Natalie Tomas provides a useful discussion of female intercessory activities as a means of exercising influence in her work on the Medici women before the principate. Tomas, *The Medici Women*, p. 4 and especially chapter two.

certain Parrolo Valla, who held the office of *podestà* in Viadana, a town in the Mantuan duchy, and was the brother of Eleonora's personal doctor:

Magnificent and Excellent sir. Since we desire that the Magnificent and Excellent sir Parrolo Valla should have his case expedited, both because he is our mayor in Viadana, and also because he is the brother of our doctor, whom we love for his virtue, valour and integrity, and desire to favour him and his family with every advantage and benefit...it would be pleasing to us that...you recommend him....¹⁷

By operating in this fashion, Eleonora was able to provide support for her courtiers in return for their service. In this particular case, in exchange for her courtier's virtue and integrity, she provided the weight of her position as backing for the judicial case of his close relative. There was no clear-cut definition of bribery or corruption in the sixteenth century, and this kind of intervention was widely accepted, and indeed expected by those who would openly petition people in positions of power in order to gain help in whatever case they were involved in.

Intercessory powers were a method of wielding power and patronage that was open to every female consort. They were a valuable means by which she could create and sustain relationships with courtiers with whom she did not have previous ties (in the example provided above, Eleonora's doctor was clearly Italian) and ensure that she retained their loyalty and support. Eleonora's intercession, like that of her sisters, should be understood as falling within the sphere of gift-giving; even though physical objects are not exchanging hands, the petitioners themselves chose to present such actions as gifts:

We are sending these sisters in our name to kiss your sublime hands with all due reverence and beg you humbly to make us *the gift* [my italics] of your favour with His Excellency, so that with your help our quarrel may be dispatched as soon as possible.¹⁸

And again:

¹⁷ 'Magnifico et Eccellente nostro carissimo. Desiderando Noi che sia ispedita la causa che tiene costì il Magnifico et eccellente messer Parrolo Valla, sì per esser egli Podestà nostro di Viadana, sì anco perche è fratello del nostro Medico, qual per la virtù, valore, et integrità sua molto amiamo, con desiderio di procurar' a lui et a casa sua ogni comodo et beneficio...caro ci sarà che...glielo raccomandiate...'. ASM, AG 2144, Fascicolo I 2, p. 179.

¹⁸ 'Mandiamo li presente nostre suori inome nostro con ogni debbita riverenza basciarle L'Eccelse mani e supplicarla humilmente resti servita farne *dono* dil suo favore appresso di Sua Eccellenza, acio Col meggio suo quanto prima Sia spedita la nostra lite...'. Italics are mine. ASM, AG 2146, Fascicolo II, p. 43.

May Your Highness...condescend, through your goodness, to enjoin the Magnificent sir Pompeo Strozzi, who is presently residing in Rome on behalf of His most Serene Highness your husband, to entreat this favour and use the word and authority of Your Highness as you see fit in this affair...Which, if I obtain this favour as I hope, I will think it a singular favour and *gift* [my italics] from Your Highness....¹⁹

The writer of this second missive is Livia Peverara da Bagno. While little information remains of her own life, members of the Peverara family had been in service to the Gonzaga. The particular choice of terminology enabled the recipient of the letter to take on the role of benevolent and disinterested patron, but in fact this is a clear example of an ongoing patronage relationship where the loyal service of the family to the dynasty, and to Eleonora as a representative of that dynasty, is rewarded by Gonzaga protection and support when necessary.²⁰ Livia Peverara's letter also contains the key words 'authority' and 'word'. Eleonora's authority here sprang from her privileged access to people who wielded concrete power, like her husband, brothers, or other men in positions of direct authority. Her intercessory activities are similar to those carried out by the Medici women by the end of the fifteenth-century, analysed by Natalie Tomas. However, as part of a fully-developed seigniorial regime, Eleonora was operating to benefit her own courtiers and she was able to call on an international range of contacts to sustain her own networks of patronage. For example, we have an example of Eleonora operating to benefit one of her courtiers by applying for favours from the imperial court:

Most noble and dear sir. We are now writing to his Caesarean Majesty as you will see from the copy of the letter which we are sending you regarding a matter that is of great concern to us, as it regards the *Cavaliere* Negri, who is as dear to us, as his honourable qualities merit....²¹

However, in order to ensure that this was an effective means of exercising patronage, the Duchesses had to be able to demonstrate to potential petitioners that these

¹⁹ 'che Vostra Altezza ... si degni per bonta sua commettere al Magnifico signor Pompeo Strozzi, qual di presente risiede in Roma per l'Altezza del Serenissimo Signore suo consorte, a voler impetrare tal gracia, et spendere l'auttorità et parola di Vostra Altezza in quello ch'egli giudicherà ispediente in questo negocio... Il che ottenendo, come spero, lo riputerò a singolare Gracia et *dono* da Vostra Altezza...'. Italics are mine. ASM, AG 2147, fascicolo III.2, p. 312.

²⁰ Kettering, 'Gift-Giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', (pp. 131-32).

²¹ 'Nobile nostro carissimo [she addresses the letter to the Mantuan ambassador in Vienna, Hercole Udine]. Scriviamo hora alla Cesarea Maestà [the Emperor Maximilian] della maniera che vederete per la copia della lettera, che vi mandiamo sopra negocio che ci è grandemente a cuore, per esser pertinente al Cavaliere Negri [named as her major-domo in a letter of 1583] tanto caro a Noi, quanto meritano le sue honorate qualità...'. ASM, AG 2145, Fascicolo III (cc.200-268), p. 224.

intercessory powers were effective and that they were able to obtain results. Unlike their male counterparts, who were able to appoint and grant favours directly, women had to rely on the benevolence and goodwill of those who had direct access to power. The correspondence of the three Habsburg Archduchesses reveals that they turned to each other to construct mutually beneficial networks and increase the range of those whom they could ask to act in favour of their clients. So we have Giovanna writing to Eleonora in March 1568, asking her to grant her the favour she has been petitioned about in order to avoid the petitioner being disappointed, and, implicitly, losing faith in her capacities:

I have received such good reports of Sir Demofonte Arsilli da Sinigaglia and he has been so recommended by certain people whom I wish to please that, since he desires a place on that *Ruota* [a judiciary tribunal], I have come to beg Your Highness to be pleased to make sure that he is granted his wish, especially as I hope that he will fit the post very well with respect to his learning and integrity, and will make himself worthy of it, as well as the fact that I will receive it as a great favour that he does not remain deprived of the hope that he placed in my interceding with Your Highness.²²

So we can see that multiple patronage relationships are woven and can operate simultaneously, and it is on these relationships, rather than the ability to make appointments or grant dispensations themselves, that the Duchesses depend for power. However, while all consorts might be said to have access to intercessory powers, Eleonora also benefitted from particular circumstances that gave her additional leverage and the power to extend patronage independently of male intervention.

An Independent Power-Base

According to both her biographers, the Jesuit Fathers Antonio Possevino and Antonio Folcario, Eleonora had been placed in charge of the administration of justice within the duchy with the help of the senate; Possevino also adds that she was left in charge of the *segnatura di gratia* in the absence of her husband.²³ This enabled her to be publicly

²² 'Mi vien fatta cosi buona relatione di messer Demofonte Arsilli da Sinigaglia et mi vien raccomandato di maniera da chi io desidero compiacere, che desiderando egli un luogo in quella Ruota, vengo a pregare l'Altezza Vostra che si contenti in gratia mia procurare che egli ne venga compiaciuto, massime che di dottrina et d'integrità spero che habbia da servire molto bene et rendersene meritevole, oltre che io riceverò a somma gratia che egli non resti defraudato della speranza che ha posta nell'intercessioni mie appresso l'Altezza Vostra...'. ASM, AG 1087, Fascicolo 5, p. 338.

²³ See Possevino, *Vita et morte della serenissima Eleonora*, pp. 30-31; Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora*, pp. 81-82. The senate was instituted in 1571, incorporating both the *Consiglio di giustizia* and the *Rota*; alongside the senate was the *Consiglio segreto*: Guerzoni, *La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna* (p. 93). Eleonora appears to have been involved in making recommendations and appeared in

identified as a figure of authority, one capable of exercising power independently of her husband. Furthermore, despite not having any clear voice in the initial creation of her court, once established as Duchess, there are indications that Eleonora was able to appoint individuals directly to positions without going through her husband. So, for example, we have a letter from her to Ferrante Gorno, *Capitano Generale* of Monferrato:

We wish Mario Anguissola to be given a place as *lanzaspezzata* in our garrison at Casale, or, if there is no such position available at present, we wish him to be given an ordinary posting, with the proviso that he is, however, treated as a *lanzaspezzata*. Take care to satisfy him, as this is what we wish to tell you for now.²⁴

Elsewhere she gives further instructions, this time in favour of a certain Carlo Vllio da Felizano:

When we were in that said city of ours, Casale, Carlo Vllio da Felizano served us so well for many days that to show our gratitude, before we left Casale, we promised to favour him when we had occasion to, and particularly to give him, as he asked, a position of *lanciaspezzata* in this garrison of ours, but because he did not remind us of this before now, when, forced by the great need for succour in which he finds himself, in order to feed his little family which is a great burden to him, he came to us as a suppliant, we had not given it to him. However, with this letter, we inform you that we very much wish for him to have at the earliest opportunity a position of *lanciaspezzata*, or some other place in this garrison of ours, so that he may recognise the effects of my gratitude to him. Do you put your mind to help him out of respect for us... [Eleonora always uses the first person plural to talk about herself].²⁵

the tribunal. The *segnatura di gratia* refers to those *suppliche* that asked for favours, rather than involving court-cases or the proceedings of justice. They were usually handled by the Duke himself, and this indicates that when Guglielmo was absent, Eleonora held a direct rather than an intercessory role.

²⁴ 'Desideraressimo che Mario Anguissola havesse in cotesto nostro Presidio di Casale una piazza di Lanzaspezzata, o[?] non vi essendo di presente simil luogo, che havesse una piazza ordinaria, conquesto però che fosse trattato come Lanzaspezzata. Habbiatemi dunque pensiero di compiacerlo, poiche questo è quanto vogliamo dirvi perhora...'. ASM, AG 2146, Fascicolo II, p. 63 (letter dated 22 December 1574).

²⁵ 'Quando eravamo in cotesta nostra Citta di Casale, Carlo Ullio da Felizano ci fece molti giorni tanto grata servitù, che per mostrar' ancor' noi gratitudine a Lui, nanti la nostra partita di Casale, gli promettemmo di favorirlo nell'occasione et particolarmente in fargli haver', come ci ricercò, un luogo di Lanciaspezzata in cotesto nostro Presidio, ma perche egli non ci ha mai fatto dar' alcuno ricordo di questo prima che hora che astretto dal gran bisogno in che si trova d'essere aiutato per poter' sostentare la sua famigliuola della quale è molto gravato, ha havuto ricorso da noi, non gliela habbiamo fatta dare. Però con questa vi facciamo saper' come desideriamo grandamente ch'egli nella prima occasione habbia un luogo di Lanciaspezzata, o qualche altra Piazza morta in cotesto nostro Presidio, accioche conosca gli effetti dello animo nostro grato verso di lui. Habbiatemi dunque l'occhio a compiacerlo per rispetto nostro...'. ASM, AG 2147, Fascicolo V, p. 376. A *lanciaspezzata* is a prince's personal bodyguard: Chiappini, *La corte estense*, p. 210.

Eleonora appears to be making these arrangements without asking the Duke, and there is no indication that she was carrying out his bidding. This ability to assign positions directly was not available for the majority of spouses. Here it enabled Eleonora to position herself as the central patron for her own courtiers, rather than competing with her husband.

The public role Eleonora was able to perform in Mantua may have been a consequence of the ongoing policies espoused by the Gonzaga dynasty. Eleonora's mother-in-law, Margherita Paleologa, had governed the duchy for her two sons: Francesco, and then after the latter's death, Guglielmo, until they reached a suitable age to rule in their own right. Her own daughter, Isabella, Guglielmo's sister, had governed Monferrato under Margherita's guidance for the three years from 1561 to 1563 in which she could rely for support on the troops of her husband, the governor of Milan.²⁶ Eleonora therefore entered a duchy which was used to seeing women in positions of authority, although these positions were at the same time temporary and subject to the approval of the male ruler.

The Mantuan Duchess also benefited from the possession of her own property, unlike her sisters in Florence and Ferrara. The history of the Jesuits in Mantua, written by the Jesuit Father Giuseppe Gorzoni (died 1713), states that Eleonora, in 1591, left them the property of the Camata, which she had received as a gift from Guglielmo in 1561 and to which she had added a substantial amount of further terrain following a financial gift from the Emperor on her visit to Vienna after the birth of her son Vincenzo. The property was adjacent to the Palace and gardens of Porto, which had been given to Eleonora by Margherita Paleologa according to the terms of her will in 1566. Ownership of the palace of Porto gave Eleonora a more independent and separate lifestyle from that of the main ducal court. She often resided here, and many of the letters she wrote were sent from there. Folcario states that she was in permanent residence there during the summer, and Gorzoni described the palace as actually being called 'il palazzo di madamma'.²⁷

The Camata was approximately 44 hectares, and contained both arable land and vineyards. It also had working farms and a herd of one hundred cattle, as well as salt

²⁶ Giuseppe Coniglio, *I Gonzaga* (Varese: Dall'Oglio, 1967), pp. 321-22.

²⁷ Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora*, p. 23; *Istoria del collegio di Mantova della Compagnia di Gesù scritta dal padre Giuseppe Gorzoni*, ed. by Antonella Bilotto and Flavio Rurale (Mantua: Gianluigi Arcari, 1997), p. 88. Gorzoni also states that Eleonora helped to fund the foundation of the College of the Jesuits in Mantua, p. 60.

mining and other privileges.²⁸ This property, while relatively small, together with her judiciary role within the duchy gave Eleonora a key independent platform from which to operate, and meant that she could extend patronage publicly and through official channels without having to rely solely on informal intercessory activities. This in turn made it easier for her to counterbalance the subordinate nature of her status with respect to the Duke and establish a strong centralised rule within her court, so preventing loss of loyalty amongst her courtiers.

Eleonora's position was further strengthened by the fact that of the three sisters who came down to Italy, she was the only one to receive her dowry. Unlike both of her sisters, Eleonora's dowry was paid. Moreover it was paid promptly: it was received in full by 14th June 1563.²⁹ This meant that the Duke did not find himself supporting a wife whose family had had not fulfilled her part of the bargain. Eleonora's position further benefitted by her early fulfilment of a key duty for all female consorts, providing the duke with a son and an heir: Vincenzo was born in 1562. Barbara, on the other hand, did not bear any children, while Giovanna only gave birth to girls up to 1577 when she had Filippo. Significantly, at this point, Bianca Cappello was sent away from court for a time. This event indicates quite how essential it was for a duchess to secure a son for the state and how her fertility could greatly enhance her position.

Dependence on the Duke

By having her dowry paid on time, by providing Guglielmo with a son early on in the marriage, by possessing an independent source of finance in her possession of the Camata and by wielding official judicial powers, Eleonora established a strong position as head of her own court, Duchess of Mantua and as a patron in her own right. However, her household was still subordinate to that of the Duke, as was her person.

²⁸ *Istoria del collegio di Mantova*, ed. by Bilotto and Rurale, p. 80.

²⁹ A great deal of confusion was generated regarding the payment of Eleonora's dowry by my discovery of a letter kept in the archives in Modena from the then Ferrarese ambassador, Evangelista Baroni, to Alfonso, dated to 12 July 1575 (ASMo, Ambasciatori Italiani a Mantova, Busta 4, Fascicolo 51, unpaginated). Here he stated that Guglielmo had induced his wife to write to the Emperor pleading with him to agree to the Duke's retention of certain honorific titles and using as emotional leverage the fact that she had not received her dowry. This contradicted the documentation contained in the Mantuan archive (ASM, AG 200, Fascicolo I, pp. 108-115), which included signed and sealed receipts for the money. I have since found the letter Baroni wrote of, however (ASM, AG 426, pp. 390-392), and this supports my view that Eleonora did receive the dowry, as her letter in fact makes no mention of the dowry at all; the ambassador was correct in his assertion that Eleonora wrote to the Emperor in defence of her husband, he just mistook the arguments she would use, possibly assuming that as his own Duchess, Barbara, had not received her dowry, her sister had not either. This provides a salutary lesson in the degree of trust we should allow when reading ambassadors' letters.

Although she performed all of the duties expected of a duchess, she still had to deal with some of the difficulties resulting from the female consort's dependence on circumstance and the wishes of her husband. Thus, Eleonora struggled to ensure payment of her allowance by her husband's court.

The Venetian ambassador, Vincenzo Tron, reported back to the Council in Venice in 1564 that:

It is true that he does not treat this wife as he should, considering both her high lineage and her goodness, since she is a very saintly lady, and also considering that she has given him such wonderful offspring; because truly, and I don't know why, he keeps her more like a private woman than as a lady of that family which she belongs to, nor has he so far given her the 10,000 ducats of her allowance, as he agreed to do in the marriage contract. She on the other hand supports everything patiently, nor does one hear that she has complained to anyone as yet....³⁰

This passage highlights, again, the importance of providing an heir as one of the main duties of a good duchess, but it also signals the peculiar position of the female consort. Just as the duke had a dual role: public and private – the 'two bodies of the king', head of his family and head of his state, so too did the duchess. She was expected to participate in charitable activities and to govern her court as well as behave as a good wife in private by providing him with children. But by not investing her with her allowance, Guglielmo was guilty in Tron's eyes of impeding the Duchess from fulfilling her official role – the public part of her being. What we may in fact be seeing here, however, is a specific Gonzaga policy; looking at the registers of expenditure, it appears that the new young Duchess, Eleonora de'Medici, was also only allocated a small amount of money to start with. She married Vincenzo Gonzaga in 1584, but we only have records for her from 1588 onwards.³¹ The following table lists monthly or two-monthly payments to Eleonora de'Medici Gonzaga of sums varying from 2,400 *lire* in

³⁰ 'È vero che a questa mogier poi non usa quel trattamento che doveria e per la qualità del sangue suo e per la bontà di lei, che è santissima signora, e finalmente per averli fatto così bella prole; perchè di verità non so per quai rispetti, la tien più tosto come zentildonna privata che come signora di quel sangue qual è, nè sinora li ha assignati li 10.000 ducati di sua provision, sì come si obligò nel matrimonio. Ella all'incontro comporta pazientemente ogni cosa, nè sin qui s'intende che si sii lamentada con alcun....'. See Aldo de Maddalena, *Le finanze del ducato di Mantova all'epoca di Guglielmo Gonzaga* (Milan: Istituto Italiano Cisalpino, 1961), p. 105 note 5. It is worth mentioning that according to the marriage contract, Eleonora was supposed to be awarded 7,000 not 10,000 ducats a year, but the significance of the extract is the same nonetheless.

³¹ ASM, AG 3141, p. 391 r, 408v, 419r, 429v, 443r, 456r, 468r, 477r, 500v and following.

January 1588, to 5,410 *lire* in June 1589,³² while it appears that Eleonora Habsburg was awarded much larger sums from around 1577 (the first year we have information for) onwards.³³ We can conclude from this information that it may have been Gonzaga policy to only provide a small allowance at first, perhaps while the Duchesses were being instructed by their mothers-in-law on how to run their courts, and only afterwards were they entrusted with larger sums of money.³⁴

Table of Allowances

Month	Year	Eleonora Habsburg	Eleonora Medici
January	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
February	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
March	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
April	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
May	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
June	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
July	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
August	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
September	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
October	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
November	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
December	1580	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
May	1583	11,400 <i>lire</i>	
January	1588	12,000 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
February	1588		2,400 <i>lire</i>
March	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	4,800 <i>lire</i>

³² ASM, AG 3141, p. 391r, 618r.

³³ Maddalena, *Le finanze del ducato di Mantova*, p. 105. In this year she appears to have been paid 64,800 *lire*. Unfortunately financial archival records in Mantua are much depleted, so we can only find information relating to Eleonora for some years and not others. However, the amount of 64,800 *lire* corresponds to an allowance of 5,400 *lire* a month which is what she appears to receive in 1580, which would suggest that she received the same amount from 1577 to 1580 and then the sums increased after she became Dowager Duchess.

³⁴ Eleonora Habsburg's mother-in-law, Margherita Paleologa, died in 1567. Unfortunately we do not have the financial information for the years immediately following this time, so it is not possible to tell whether an increase in the allowance occurred following her death, however, it does appear that Margherita Paleologa did play a part in instructing the young Eleonora, according to Bellù, 'Le due Eleonore' (p. 158).

April	1588	7,800 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
May	1588	10,200 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
June	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
July	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	800 <i>lire</i>
August	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	4,200 <i>lire</i>
September	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	
October	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
November	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	3,018 <i>lire</i>
December	1588	6,000 <i>lire</i>	4,200 <i>lire</i>
January	1589	6,000 <i>lire</i>	2,382 <i>lire</i>
February	1589	9,000 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
March	1589	6,000 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
April	1589	6,000 <i>lire</i>	
May	1589	6,000 <i>lire</i>	
June	1589	6,000 <i>lire</i>	5,410 <i>lire</i>
July	1589	6,000 <i>lire</i>	1,790 <i>lire</i>
August	1589	12,000 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
September	1589	5,400 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
October	1589	5,400 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
November	1589	5,400 <i>lire</i>	4,800 <i>lire</i>
December	1589	5,400 <i>lire</i>	
January	1590	5,400 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
February	1590	10,800 <i>lire</i>	2,400 <i>lire</i>
April	1590		
May	1590	5,400 <i>lire</i>	2,700 <i>lire</i>

While family tradition may have influenced the arrangements that were made for the Duchesses, their lack of any form of independent institutional authority made them ultimately dependent on the individual character of the Dukes in question. It is in this light that we should consider the rumours of miserliness that surrounded Guglielmo Gonzaga, evidence for which has already been encountered in the letters documenting his struggle with the emperor over the marriage contract. Although the payments to Eleonora increased, they were not always regular – the amounts varied and she did not always receive her allowance every month. There are two letters dating to March and August 1583 in which the Duchess was forced to plead with him to give her the money she argued that she was in desperate need of. In the first of these she expressly set out the problem almost all female consorts faced:

I beg Your Highness again to concede this favour and not show me such a hard heart, as I am yet Your Highness' wife and I have nothing on which to live on if not what Your Highness gives me...³⁵

And in the second she reiterated her troubles, writing in exasperation:

May Your Highness advise me what I am supposed to do because it is not possible to live like this...³⁶

The list of payments contained in *busta* 3141 show an unusually large sum of 11.400 *lire* being awarded to Eleonora in May 1583,³⁷ so her pleading must have had some sort of effect, especially as the wording of the entry mentions 'allowance' in the plural, i.e. 'in consideration of her allowances', but there is nothing thereafter till after the Duke's death in 1587, so we unfortunately don't know if there was any response to the letter she sent him in August. However, another letter dating to September 1584 regarding the pawning of a jewel, which again mentions her financial difficulties, indicates that her quest to ensure her allowance was an ongoing one, and was not always successful.³⁸ This inability to ensure the prompt payment of her allowance could have a serious effect

³⁵ 'prego Vostra Altezza un'altra volta conceder questa gracia e non mostrarmi cuor cusi dura volto da me che son pur moglier di Vostra Altezza e non ho altro di viver se non quel che me da Vostra Altezza...'. ASM, AG 2149, p. 675.

³⁶ 'Vostra Altezza me consugli quel che a da far perche a questa maniera non e possibile da viver...' ASM, AG 2149, p. 691.

³⁷ ASM, AG 3141, p. 349r.

³⁸ ASM, AG 2150, p. 237. This is supported by the information provided by Father Gorzoni who explains that she stripped her wardrobe of its most expensive dresses and sold her jewels and various other objects in order to raise the money necessary to help the Jesuits to settle in Mantua. This occurred in 1584, so it coincides with her pleas with Guglielmo for further funds, which she may have wished to destine to this purpose. *Istoria del collegio di Mantova*, ed. by Bilotto and Rurale, p. 60.

on the Duchess' role as patron and head of her court, and her ability to wield influence could suffer as a result.

Further indication that despite her strong position as Duchess and head of her own court, Eleonora was still subject to the Duke and under his ultimate authority comes from his control over her freedom of movement. The archive in Mantua provides evidence that Eleonora had to request permission to travel abroad, as a letter dating to April 1582 demonstrates:

Most Serene and Dear Consort, I have received a letter from my brother the Archduke [Ferdinand of Tyrol, about to marry Eleonora's daughter Anna Caterina], and Sir Dario has just told me on His Highness' behalf that he wishes greatly for me to come with our daughter to Innsbruck...and so I cannot refrain, to obey the Archduke, and for my own satisfaction, from begging Your Highness to grant this favour to the Archduke, to me and to our daughter, and give me licence to go with our daughter, which we will all recognise as a most singular favour...³⁹

Eleonora was in fact allowed to go on this occasion, and indeed also paid further visits outside the duchy: to her sister in Ferrara and her relatives in Innsbruck. Giovanna, on the other hand, appears never to have returned to Germany, and never visited either of her sisters after her marriage. The conclusion to draw, once again, is that female consorts faced a series of potential restrictions on their independence. Once they had left their native families they were usually required to resign any rights they might have to their native lands and so all they had left was their dowry, which was paid to their husbands, if at all, rather than themselves. It is true that according to the terms of their marriage contracts, they were assigned allowances, and they could also receive gifts and donations of land, but their power to enforce the payment of these allowances depended largely on their relationship with their new family and the willingness to intervene of their native family.⁴⁰

³⁹ 'Serenissimo Signor et Consort mio Carissimo

io ho havuto litera dal archiduca mio signor fradelo, et ame hora il signor dario me a deto da parta di Sua Altezza chel desidara asaj che io venga con la figliola fora a insprug...cosi non pos manchara por obedir al archiduca e per mia sadisfacion a pregara Vostra Altezza che voi far questa gracia al archiduca a me e alla figliola e dar me licencia aciocha poso andare con la figliola la qual conoseremo tutte trai per singular gracia...'. ASM, AG 2149, p. 312.

⁴⁰ The risk inherent in donations and gifts is highlighted by a passage in *Istoria del collegio di Mantova*, ed. by Bilotto and Rurale, p. 80, in which he comments on the fact that Eleonora had received the Camata as a gift only verbally from Guglielmo, and upon his death rushed to get her rights to it set down in writing and signed by her son Vincenzo.

Conclusion

Eleonora's rule as Duchess may be said to have been successful – she received her dowry, provided the duchy with a male heir, held ownership of land and property in her estate at Camata and the palace of Porto, and had the opportunity to exercise her own authority at court and within the wider confines of the duchy. However, despite these benefits and her good relationship with her new family, she still faced difficulties in asserting her rights over her allowance and over her own person. Her case demonstrates the possibilities open to the female consort and the levels of independence of action that could be achieved. However, her situation also shows that even given the best possible scenario, the female consort's personal freedom and her ability to extend patronage was ultimately dependent on male relationships – that with her husband who controlled the payments of her allowance, and her own personal movements, and that with her father who might or might not deliver her dowry. Nevertheless, despite her struggle over payments, the level of personal authority and financial independence that Eleonora enjoyed was greater than that afforded to her two sisters. I will discuss in chapter five whether this increased degree of freedom to operate according to more masculine models of power than her sisters influenced the ways in which Eleonora made use of gift-giving and consumption practices in order to assert her identity and extend influence.

Chapter Three

Barbara

At the end of April Her Highness was overtaken by fever and pains in her sides and the pain was so great that before fourteen days had passed the doctors thought she was dead...¹

If Eleanora had a relatively successful and long-lived period as Duchess in Mantua, her sister, Barbara, Duchess of Ferrara, who died of tuberculosis in 1572, had only a limited reign in Ferrara. Because of the brevity of her reign as duchess, and her frequent illness, little evidence remains of her activities in the archive of Modena, where the Este records were transferred after Ferrara was subsumed into the Papal territories. However, the documents that do survive indicate that Barbara provides an example of a female consort who was also able to access power thanks to the particular traditions of government of her husband's family, even while she faced considerable restrictions in other areas of potential influence. Her situation demonstrates that access to official sources of power did not necessarily translate into the ability to extend patronage freely, or even to claim control over one's own court. She also demonstrates how a consort could counter her husband's interference and attempt to reinstate her own control over some areas by using her ownership and ability to dispose of particular possessions. While accepting courtiers from her new homeland, Barbara remained strongly attached to her native retainers and companions, and was able to maintain a court divided along national lines throughout her life, highlighting her preferences through her gift-giving activities.

¹ 'Nel fine dell'Aprile passato Sua Altezza fu soprapresa da febre et da dolori nelle coste et il male divenne così grave che prima dei xiiii giorni fu presa per morta dai medici...'. ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 24, Fascicolo 10, letter dated 3 October 1572.

The Composition and Control of Barbara's Court

Judging from the contents of her will (Appendix 2) and from the lists of the salaried members of her court (see tables 1 and 2), Barbara appears to have brought a number of German followers with her. The Venetian ambassador Contarini went so far as to state that the Ferrarese Duchess would be served for the most part by her German household.² Once Barbara arrived, however, and over the following years, the Duke could and did install loyal members of his own into his consort's court. This was part of the general strategy of ensuring the absorption of the foreign consort into her new environment and it serves as a useful reminder that the boundaries between the courts could be fluid. The Duchesses could face challenges to their role as undisputed heads of their courts and difficulties in maintaining the patron-client relationships with their own courtiers. The female consort might not be in full control of appointments to her own court, and when they were, as it appears Eleonora was, they faced the constant possibility that this right might be challenged, if, as we shall see in the case of Giovanna, husband and wife came into conflict.

In Barbara's case, the lists of salaries paid to court members can help to clarify the quantity of German retainers kept by the Habsburg Duchess, although there are still several problems as most of her courtiers are identified by their first, Italianised, names only. Furthermore, these lists include both Alfonso and Barbara's courtiers with no obvious differentiation, and they exclude female members of court. Despite these difficulties, however, as some of those named can be confirmed as being in her court by their mention in her will, or other documents, and the fact that certain names seem to be gathered together in the list, I have assumed that these were members of her court and I have attempted the following reconstruction for the year 1567:³

² 'Si servirà Sua Altezza nella maggior parte della sua famiglia di tedeschi'. *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*. Appendix, ed. by Alberi, p. 249.

³ ASMo, Camera Ducale, Bolletta dei Salariati 76.

Table 1: Barbara's Courtiers. Year 1567

Italian Members of Court	German Members of Court	Non-identifiable Members
Alessandro Pocaterra	Gaspar d'Ispruch [Innsbruck]	Antonio servitor alle Dame
Illustre Conte Hercole Rangone	Matheo d'Ispruch	Joseph Scarpe
Conte Federico Miroglio	Gioa' de Baviera [Bavaria]	Melchior Cappellano [chaplain]
Francesco Sosena	Andrea Paour	Osbaldo sartore [tailor]
Alfonso Sanseverini	Giorgio Marouer'	Rodolfo credenziero [in charge of the buffet]
Paolo Gondi	Gioani d'Ispruch	Cesar credenziero
Iacomo Trentino	Valentino da Viena [Vienna]	Gioa' facchino alle Camere [porter]
Piero da Pistoia	Giorgio d'Alere	Marcantonio facchino
Borso Bonacosso	Giorgio da Viena	Iacomo facchino alla credenza
Barthoe Bonapace		Iacomo facchino alla bottiglieria [cellar]
Sebastiano Gambino		Battista bottiglierio [in charge of the cellar]
		Andrea facchino al tinello [dining hall]
		Marcantonio usciero [door-keeper]
		Simone de Leone [Lyons]
		Veronese lavamasseritie [washer]

In 1569, the list remains substantially unchanged:⁴

⁴ ASMo, Camera Ducale, Computisteria, Bolletta dei Salariati 70.

Table 2: Barbara's Courtiers. Year 1569:

Italian Members of Court	German Members of Court	Non-identifiable Members
Alessandro Pocaterra	Davit Rauser	Bastiano cuoco [cook]
Illustre Conte Hercole Rangone	Faitulo da Viena	Joseph Scarpe
Conte Federico Miroglio	Anderle Tedesco	Francesco Cappellano
Francesco Sosena	Andrea Paour	Osbaldo sartore
Alfonso Sanseverini	Giorgio Marouer'	Pandolfo credenziero
Gregorio Todeschini	Gioani d'Ispruch	Cesar credenziero
Iacomo Trentino	Giorgio da Viena	Gioa' facchino alle Camere
Piero da Pistoia	Giorgio d'Alere	Marcantonio facchino
Borso Bonacosso		Iacomo facchino alla credenza
Bart.lo Bonapace		Pietro Antonio facchino alla bottiglieria
Sebastiano Gambino		Valentino bottiglierio
Antonio Passeno		Andrea facchino al tinello
		Marcantonio usciero
		Simone de Leone
		Veronese lavamasseritie
		Battista bottiglierio
		Cristoforo staffiero [footman]

Out of these lists, 37 can be identified as probable members of Barbara's court in 1569,⁵ of whom eight can definitely be categorized as Austro-German from their last names or their association with a city, around twelve can probably be identified as Italian and the rest are only known by their first names, so are unidentifiable. One may conclude that although the German contingent was still a solid group four years after Barbara's arrival in Ferrara, her court also had a substantial intake of Italian courtiers.

In Ferrara as in Mantua there is a degree of evidence to demonstrate that Alfonso intervened in the composition of his wife's court once it was settled within the city. Alfonso appointed officials to Barbara's court, thus intervening in one of the key patron-client relationships between courtier and ruler and demonstrating the effective lack of a true separation that existed between the male and the female courts in the early modern period. The evidence for this is contained in a letter which he sent to Barbara, bidding her send for a certain Hipolito Bevilacqua:

I find that the Count Hercole Rangone has come down with gout and since I think that Your Highness, for the sake of your reputation, should have with you a Gentleman of well advanced in years, I have hit upon the Count Hipolito Bevilacqua, who is of good habits and a good age, as well as everything else that Your Highness already knows, and if he is at the country house you can order him to come immediately...⁶

However, instead of appointing the Count himself and sending him to Barbara, the Duke informed Barbara of his choice and told her to send for him herself. This may indicate a certain ambiguity and the necessity for careful negotiation between the public and private relationships involved. I have already mentioned the Venetian ambassador's disapproval at Guglielmo's failure to treat his wife according to her rank and role. Alfonso was clearly aware that while in private, as husband, he was the head of the family and therefore chose his wife's companions, as Duchess, Barbara held a position of high status and was head of her own court, so it was more appropriate for her to officially summon her new courtier, even though she was doing so under private direction from her husband.

⁵ This number fits with Ghirardo's estimate of between 28 and 35 salaried individuals present in Lucrezia Borgia's court in 1519. Ghirardo, 'Lucrezia Borgia as Entrepreneur', (p. 80).

⁶ 'Io trovo che il Conte Hercole Rangone e impedito dalla gotta et parendomi che sia pur bene che Vostra Altezza per riputatione habbia seco un Gentilhuomo atempato mi e parso che sia a proposito il conte Hipolito Bevilacqua che e di buoni costumi et d'eta con tutto il resto che e noto a Vostra Altezza, la quale quando egli fosse alla villa potrà ordinare che subito sia fatto venire...'. ASMo, ASE, Sezione Casa e Stato 83, 'Lettere di Alfonso II d'Este Duca di Ferrara alla moglie Barbara d'Austria', letter dated 15 March 1571 (unpaginated).

It wasn't only the Duke who had an interest in her court. Barbara also had to deal with potential interference from the families of her courtiers. This was manifested in another letter from Alfonso in which he discussed the situation involving one of Barbara's ladies. Barbara wished the girl, from the Wolckenstein family, to remain with her, but there appears to have been pressure from her family for her to return to Germany to be married. Alfonso advised her to write to the girl's father and tell him that she would only send her when she had received appropriate reassurances that the marriage proposition was a good one. He ended the letter by suggesting she emphasise that she is working for the benefit of the girl, 'as if you were her very father'.⁷ This is a key concept, as it alludes to the fundamental ambiguity of the type of role Barbara had to fill within her court, and it can be referred back again to my previous discussion over the appointment of members of Barbara's court and the idea of the ruler's two bodies – public and private. Within her public role as Duchess, Barbara was a pseudo-patriarchal figure, expected to arrange the marriages of those ladies within her court and able to contradict other male figures, such as the head of the Wolckenstein family because of her position in society.⁸ On the other hand, because of her private and subordinate role as wife Alfonso was able to intervene in her affairs, as we have seen with the appointment of Hipolito Bevilacqua.

While Barbara may not have retained ultimate control over the composition of her court, her will testifies that she was able to assert her preferences and her feelings about the different members of her household (Appendix 2). This document demonstrates that a courtier might not depend on the Duchess' authority for his post, but

⁷ 'Io ho veduto quanto Vostra Altezza mi scrive intorno al particolare della Bolchenstan [Wolckenstein], sopra che mi occorre di dirle che quando ella habbia caro che questa dama resti presso di se ... potrà Vostra Altezza scrivere ad esso suo padre circa ciò, con significarle quanto sia sempre per vederla volentieri con lei, ma che nondimeno sarà sempre per mandargliela... quando vegga che il partito di maritarla sia a suo molto profitto... et che per ciò ella non le darà in modo alcuno licenza, fin che questo non le sia fatto conoscere ... Ne lascerò di soggiungerle che in questo caso ella sarà tenuta a cercar sempre ogni beneficio della giovane: et anche a servirla di padre medesimo...'. (I have seen what Your Highness writes to me regarding the affair of the Wolckenstein girl, on which I must say that if you hold dear that this lady remain with you...Your Highness can write to her father regarding this matter, indicating that you are always pleased by her company, but nonetheless you are ready to send her to him...when you see that the marriage arrangements are highly beneficial to her...and so that you will not give her licence to depart, until you have been informed of the marriage arrangements...Nor will I omit to say that in this case you will be held to always seek every benefit for the young lady; and to act as a very father to her...). Ibid., letter dated 21 October 1566.

⁸ In actual fact it appears that by 1571 Barbara's lady-in-waiting had returned to Austria. A letter from Alfonso in Vienna to Barbara dated to December 1571 states that he had seen the girl and she had forgotten almost all her Italian. Ibid., letter dated 18 December 1571. Treatises on household management advised that servants were part of the family and masters and mistresses were encouraged to adopt a parental attitude toward them. Romano, 'Aspects of Patronage', (p. 716).

if he wished to benefit from serving in her court, he had to remain on good terms with her.⁹ A will could be employed as a tool through which she could reward some and relegate others, without reference to the wishes of the Duke, and this gave the consort access to a certain level of control over her courtiers. Several copies of Barbara's will exist and, like Margherita Paleologa's in Mantua, they may have been written and re-written over a period of years. The profusion of copies and the number of people who were required to sign such documents suggest that their contents would not have been secret. As a consequence, Barbara could employ her will as an alternative means of patronage, rewarding those who were loyal to her, and ensuring they remained so.¹⁰ Barbara's last will and testament demonstrates that although she was surrounded by a court made up of people of both Austro-German and Italian extraction, she created a clear distinction between them. The German ladies of her court are named first and are separated from the Italian ladies, who follow further down the list.¹¹ In the allocation of items of clothing, Barbara's German ladies had the first pick of her dresses, while the only Italian lady to be given one had perforce to take: 'the fifth gown, i.e. the loveliest and most precious after the aforementioned four...' ¹² [which were awarded to Barbara's German ladies]. Furthermore, in the distribution of monetary bequests, while her German women were awarded between seventy and two thousand *scudi*, the Italian women received a maximum of four hundred *scudi*. This indicates that Barbara's links and ties remained firmly to her native background and she directed her patronage activities first and foremost towards them. I will discuss in further detail the contents of Barbara's will and the significance of her access to objects in delivering patronage and strengthening networks in chapter seven.

⁹ That women could use their control over certain aspects of patronage as a weapon is clearly demonstrated in the story recounted by Marguerite de Navarre, where the heroine, mistreated by the Queen, reproaches her for withholding the gifts she is supposed to provide for members of her court, such as arranging suitable marriages. Davis, *The Gift*, pp. 132-34.

¹⁰ For further discussion of the employment of wills in the patronage process, see Romano, 'Aspects of Patronage' (pp. 717-18).

¹¹ See Appendix 2. This clear separation and its contrast with Eleonora's will may be a result of the different periods of time each spent in their respective duchies. Barbara was Duchess for only seven years before her death, and so the process of integration was naturally at its beginnings, while Eleonora remained in Mantua for over thirty years, so naturally her will presents far less rigidly defined separations between her old retainers and her new ones.

¹² Ibid.

Patronage and Power

Barbara never received the dowry that had been set out in the contract. However, she did receive an annual allowance from her husband. No records have survived detailing personal purchases or payments by Barbara; however, the lists of the salaries paid to court members contain payments made to both the Duchess herself and to members of her court. These demonstrate that Barbara actually received far less per year than stipulated in the marriage contract.¹³ The Venetian Ambassador Alvise Contarini asserted in his 1565 report on Ferrara that she would receive an allowance of 12,000 ducats a year, but the figures reported by ambassadors were not always reliable.¹⁴ Vincenzo Tron had said in his 1564 report that Eleonora was due an annual allowance of 10,000 ducats a year, and yet that figure was never mentioned in the contract, which had instead settled on 7,000 *scudi* a year, and which, as we have seen, was not paid regularly or in the sums agreed in the contract. In Ferrara, in fact, according to the 1567 and 1569 lists of salaries, Barbara was only awarded 2,160 *lire* a month; however, out of this, again from the evidence presented by the lists, it does not look like she paid for the male members of her court. I would suggest this is the case because none of the ladies-in-waiting are named amongst the salaried members of the court, which would indicate that she was in charge of paying for their upkeep, but the presence of her male servants together with the Duke's would indicate that she was not charged with their salaries. As we shall see from the evidence presented in Florence, this system does not appear to have been unusual. Particular arrangements could be made so that the female consort might be made responsible for paying for certain parts of her upkeep and court and not others; she could share the responsibility for paying salaries with her husband, or she could be in charge of paying for all of her courtiers. Arrangements, furthermore, could change from one duchess to the next. Barbara's predecessor Renée of France kept her own independent court and had accounts written in French which were kept in separate volumes from those of the Duke. In these she detailed the amounts paid to the ladies and gentlemen of her court. Her father-in-law Alfonso I wrote bitterly to his ambassador in France:

¹³ In the dowry contract, ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato 330, 'Documenti concernanti il matrimonio di Alfonso II con Barbara d'Austria'(sottotascicolo 1969-II), document 1969.II.3: 'Originale dello Stamento Dotale di Madama Barbara d'Austria, sorella dell'Imperador Massimiliano II destinata in Isposa ad Alfonso II Duca di Ferrara', p. 6, she was promised an annual income of 10,000 *scudi*, but, looking at the numbers listed in ASMo, Camera Ducale, Bolletta dei salariati 70, this doesn't appear to have happened.

¹⁴ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*. Appendix, ed. by Alberi, p. 249.

There is excessive expenditure to sustain Madame's lifestyle and that of her household, in order to treat them as she wishes, and she also spends excessively and without consideration, because although her household is of little use and of little honour, yet she pays them as though she was well served and honoured.¹⁵

Renée's was able to ensure her courtiers were paid these supposedly excessive amounts because she received her allowance from France. However, in 1554, after prolonged struggles with her husband over her religious beliefs and his foreign policies which were becoming increasingly anti-French, she was no longer able to control her expenditure and her court was drastically reduced.¹⁶ This demonstrates both the lack of fixed rules and regulations for the female consort and the real lack of secure independence of the *domina's* court. As I will demonstrate in chapter five, the duchess could never be sure that the arrangements set in place for herself and her court would not change –everything depended on her relationship with her husband and his family, rather than on the arrangements she might wish for. It also meant that the duchess' courtiers were aware that their posts ultimately depended on the duke rather than the duchess and their loyalty and patronage interests were consequently inclined towards him. This again could influence the ways in which the duchess sought to use material culture to bind her servants to her.

Like her two sisters, Barbara interceded on behalf of various supplicants, and she also used her position as Duchess to extend her patronage through marriage arrangements. An indication that she was involved in this kind of activity is given by Alfonso Lazzari in his biography of the last three duchesses of Ferrara, in which he asserts that Barbara celebrated the wedding of one of her Austrian ladies - Elena Botzlein, to the ducal carver, a position of high social status, Mirogli.¹⁷ This demonstrates that Barbara was intent upon creating alliances between her court and that of the Duke her husband, a subject I will broach again in my discussion of Giovanna. However, although Barbara did have an allowance that allowed her to undertake certain

¹⁵ 'Si spende superfluamente nel vivere di Madama et de la sua famiglia per trattarla come ella vuole, ella fa anche molte spese immoderate et mal consyderate, perche' ha una famiglia poco hutile et poco honorevole; et nientedimeno la paga come se ne fosse ottimamente servita et honorata'. Gorris, 'D'un chateau à l'autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara (1528-1560)' (p. 149).

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁷ Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara*, p. 129. This is supported by a reference in Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense*, p. lxxx, although he asserts that the lady was married to Barbara's own carver, not Alfonso's. The man in question may be the Count Federico Miroglio listed in Barbara's court in 1569, see table on p. 70.

aspects of patronage, it was not nearly as large as that of her siblings, and indicates that Barbara did not have the same degree of financial freedom.

Female consorts faced different types of limitations on their activities. In Barbara's case she faced restrictions in a key area of female patronage: almsgiving and charitable work.¹⁸ The letters from the Jesuits who resided in Ferrara indicate that they were far more cautious about contacting the Duchess and relying upon her good offices than their counterparts in Florence. While Giovanna actively visited the Jesuits' home in the city and established relations with them independently of her husband, in Ferrara, the Jesuit Father Polanco warned his fellow priest and Rector of the Jesuit College in Ferrara, Fulvio Androzzi, to be wary in any approaches made to Barbara, advising him to speak to her only through her confessor and to make sure that if he wished for her help in some matter, he got the Duke's consent first.¹⁹ Despite these precautions, the situation could still be difficult; on Christmas Eve 1565, soon after the Duchess' arrival in Ferrara, Androzzi wrote to the head of the order, Borgia, telling him of the Duke's irate message to the Jesuits, in which he told them:

To mind our own business and leave the Duchess alone, threatening to send us away from here [Ferrara] and that he wished to govern her in his own way and not ours, accusing us of ambition.²⁰

The situation had not changed by the following year: in May the Rector gloomily reported of Barbara that:

¹⁸ Almsgiving was one amongst a range of pious activities open to the female consort in the early modern period. Giovanna was praised for assisting the poor and needy, both religious and not. Giovambatista Adriani, *Orazione di M. Giovambatista Adriani nell'esequie della Sereniss. Giovanna d'Austria Gran Duchessa di Toscana* (Florence: Giunti, 1578) (unpaginated).

¹⁹ Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, p. 301.

²⁰ Ibid. 'Che attendessimo a far fatti nostri et lasciando star la duchessa, minacciando di cacciarne di qua et che egli voleva governarla a suo modo et non al nostro, notandoci d'ambitione...'. There appear to have been a succession of clashes between the Duke and the Jesuits, including an episode where the viceroy of Naples appealed to the Pope to have a Jesuit preacher sent to him, rather than to Alfonso. The Jesuits obeyed the Pope, despite the fact that they had already agreed to send the preacher to Alfonso. The Duke appears to have harboured a great deal of resentment at this slight, and he may also have been wary of allowing a religious group that would obey the Pope, with whom he had a very troubled relationship, over him, to gain too much influence in his territory. He may also have been unwilling to allow his wife to get too closely involved with the Jesuits, as they had a reputation for both employing women to intercede with their male family members, and also urging them to reach out into the community and participate in active social reform. Without a male heir and facing the prospect of losing his duchy to the Papacy, Alfonso would not have wished his wife to become the pawn of a religious order. For a discussion of the active relationships between noblewomen and the Jesuits, see Olwen Hufton, 'Altruism and Reciprocity: the Early Jesuits and their Female Patrons', *Renaissance Studies*, 15.3 (2001), 328-53 (pp. 332-33, 339).

Her great desire to help...has more the will to do so than the power, because seeing that she is very much inclined to hand out alms (which is no longer a customary activity) she will not be given the opportunity to do so.²¹

This indicates that Barbara depended to a great degree on her husband for her access to avenues of patronage and in this case he was preventing her from employing almsgiving as a means of asserting her status and position. Instead, it appears that the Duke monopolised this activity, giving out all the alms himself: 'The Duke...having ordered all the alms that were normally given to be handed out...'.²² The Jesuits may have wished Barbara had greater control over almsgiving as they felt they had more influence over her and could help to direct her patronage activities towards themselves and the causes they favoured. However, the key point here is that the Duchess faced a whole series of limitations on the possibilities she had available to her in creating a visible and independent persona at court and outside, and in building and sustaining patronage relationships. Barbara was restricted at court by not having full financial control over the salaries allocated to courtiers and by facing intervention by her husband over appointments to positions; she had only a limited personal allowance, which, added to her lack of dowry and independent revenues or property, diminished her capacity to act independently; and she was barred from distributing financial patronage in the Duchy which meant that her capacity to set herself up as a public patron was also curtailed.²³

Like Eleonora, Barbara did, however, have access to a degree of formal power. In 1572, when Alfonso was away at the imperial court in Vienna, Barbara governed on his behalf. News of this undertaking comes from a letter held not in the archive, but in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena. Unfortunately it is not an original document but a copy that an anonymous nineteenth-century historian made of a now lost letter from Barbara to the Count Paolo Emilio, Ambassador at the Court of the Duke of Savoy. In it she condemned the behaviour of the ambassador residing in Ferrara on behalf of the Duke of Savoy, stating that he had appeared in the council chamber and spoken out of turn, with no regard for those who were listening, including herself amongst this

²¹ 'Il suo grande desiderio di giovarne...avrà più animo che forze, perchè si dubita che vedendosi ella molto inclinata a dare elemosine (il che è andato in desuetudine) non se li dia molta comodità di poterne fare'. Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, p. 302.

²² 'Il duca ... avendo ordinato se diano tutte l'elemosione che solea dare...'. Ibid, p. 301.

²³ It is undoubtedly true that Barbara did engage in some charitable endeavours – for example after the terrible earthquakes that shook Ferrara in 1570 and 1571, she founded the Orphanage of St Barbara. However, these efforts appear to have been unique and in response to extraordinary events, rather than part of the daily round of responding to *suppliche* and publicly handing out alms as her sister did in Florence.

number.²⁴ One cannot regard this as incontrovertible evidence that Barbara held the reins of government for Alfonso, but her presence in the council chamber does support the idea that she did participate in state matters during his absence. The tone of the letter, although it was written by a scribe, is direct and forceful and reveals another side to the traditional characterisation of Barbara which focuses on her gentle nature and devotion to her husband and to her charitable activities, as evinced in her founding of the orphanage of Santa Barbara.²⁵ Instead it shows a woman acting in the political environment of the court and dialoguing directly with other rulers and their representatives.

The particular circumstances that characterised the three duchies played a significant part in the decision to allow the female consort to exercise public power or not. Both Mantua and Ferrara had been ruled by their respective dynasties for centuries. The nobility was firmly oriented towards the court for roles and rewards, and the structures that had sustained the previous communal governments had long fallen into disuse or were under the control of, and in the gift of the ruler. The political heart of the city was identified with the dynasty rather than the structures that served to run it.²⁶ Furthermore, there had already been a long tradition of Gonzaga and Este condottieri, and in their absence figures such as Eleonora d'Aragona and her daughter Isabella d'Este had created a practice of temporary female rule.²⁷ Therefore women such as Barbara, even though they might face considerable constraints on their freedom of action elsewhere, thanks to tradition and a perception of them as representatives of the ruling dynasty rather than independent agents, were able to participate in government. Barbara's own sister-in-law, Leonora, had also ruled in Alfonso's absence; once Barbara became Duchess, however, it was clearly her role to govern in her husband's absence and she took Leonora's place.

In Florence, on the other hand, Cosimo and his son were only in the first decades of building up loyalty to a court and to a central dynasty. There was no tradition of women ruling while the male members of the family were away, and there had been a

²⁴ Biblioteca Estense in Modena, Lettere Autografe (Manoscritti Italiani 1820), Collocazione B 1.2.2, Fascicolo 80462, p.156.

²⁵ Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, p. 331.

²⁶ The public purse and the private wealth of the family were also indistinguishable, as Tomas points out gradually became the case in Florence too with the rise of the Medici dynasty. Tomas, *The Medici Women*, p. 92.

²⁷ Lucrezia Borgia had also ruled in Alfonso's stead when the latter travelled to France at the end of 1518. Ghirardo, 'Lucrezia Borgia as Entrepreneur', (p. 56).

great republican distaste in Florence for the idea of female participation in politics. We can see this in the reaction to Alfonsina Orsini's involvement on behalf of her exiled Medici son in the fifteenth century.²⁸ Consequently restrictions on the activities of the female consort could depend not only on the desires of her husband, but also the political situation of her state. There were no clear rules and regulations for the role and function of the female consort. Barbara's political activity reveals the potential variety of opportunities open to female consorts very clearly. However, her experience also proves that the independence or individual power of a consort was not necessarily revealed through their access to officially sanctioned, traditionally male-dominated roles.²⁹ Barbara may have governed for her husband while he was away, but during her day-to-day life she was very restricted in her interaction with the world outside the court, and her rule over her own courtiers was effectively waylaid by her husband's control over salaries and positions.

²⁸ For a discussion of Medici women in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, and the association of female rule with seigneurial politics, see Tomas, *The Medici Women*, especially chapter six. In fact Eleonora de Toledo did occasionally hold the reins of government for her husband, Cosimo, for example when he went to meet the Emperor Charles V in Genoa in 1541, and again during the war with Siena in 1554. This can be seen as an indication of the transition towards a clearly seigneurial rule, but there are still suggestions of a certain degree of anxiety about her regency. The majordomo Pierfrancesco Riccio wrote on separate occasions to Cosimo in 1541, reassuring him that the Duchess was attending with skill to the business of government, and that the city was very tranquil. See Carlo Odoardo Tosi, 'Eleonora di Toledo reggente lo stato', *L'Illustratore Fiorentino: calendario storico*, VII (1910), 162-66 (pp. 165-66).

²⁹ Natalie Tomas also points out that although an important factor, the type of regime alone did not determine the extent of female participation in politics. Her work on the activities of the Medici women before the principate provides some useful parallels with my own work, especially in her discussion of female intercessory and charitable activities. Tomas, *The Medici Women*, pp. 2, 4 and chapter two.

Chapter Four

Giovanna

In my focus on Eleonora and Barbara, I have highlighted some of the key activities in which female consorts were involved, such as arranging marriages, and interceding on behalf of their courtiers. From this it is clear that the three Habsburg Archduchesses were heavily reliant on networking with each other and with members of their entourage, both German and Italian, in order to carry out these activities. However, I have also demonstrated some of the differences that could exist between consorts in terms of their access to power and control over their own courtiers and by extension the wider citizenry. Both Eleonora and Barbara had access to official administrative roles, however, Eleonora's access to an independent powerbase, resulting from separate ownership of land and a private residence, as well as a permanent role in the administration of justice, enabled her to extend authority and control over those around her in ways that were effectively denied to Barbara because of her lack of financial assets, and her husband's refusal to allow her to participate in certain patronage activities. This, combined with her relatively short life-span and ill health meant that Barbara appears to have integrated into Ferrarese society to a lesser extent than her sister Eleonora, whose will reveals the creation of closer bonds to Mantuan citizens.¹ Barbara's will instead suggests the presence of clear boundaries between her native courtiers, whom she favoured, and the Ferrarese who came second in her affections. In both cases, however, I have highlighted the Duchesses' ultimate subordination to their husbands, their financial dependence and the constant possibility of ducal intervention in the composition and running of their courts, either through the payment of salaries, or the allocation of court members chosen by them. Barbara's and Eleonora's experiences

¹ Eleonora's will does not separate her Italian retainers from her native companions, nor does it differentiate in terms of the generosity of the legacies. See Appendix 2.

in their respective duchies demonstrate that the female consort's access to official power did not necessarily denote personal authority, and that the female court was not a self-sufficient and independent replica of the male court.

In this chapter, I examine the composition of Giovanna's court and the intervention she faced from her husband, and demonstrate that the porous, dependent nature of the female court was especially evident in Florence. I also analyse the Duchess's patronage activities and the relationships she sought to create and sustain with courtiers and clients both within and outside the confines of the court.

The Composition of Giovanna's Court

The third Duchess under discussion, Giovanna has the most substantial archival evidence remaining today. Giovanna arrived in Florence in the winter of 1565 with a large retinue of servants and courtiers.² As we have seen, the subject of the allocation of court positions within the female court is one that deeply concerned contemporary rulers. The Duke of Mantua discussed the matter repeatedly with his envoys at the imperial court, and the Medici too appear to have communicated with their ambassadors on the matter. A letter from Sigismondo de Rossi, Count of San Secondo to Francesco confirms this interest:

During various discussions with people who basically have a lot of contact with the majordomo, and were perhaps sent to me on purpose, they have asked if I thought that when Her Highness [Giovanna] chose anyone to be in her service, either as a majordomo or as a riding master or in other similar offices, they would be confirmed with Your Excellency's approval. Since I didn't have any orders or instructions, I answered that Her Highness [Giovanna] was to be mistress of everything and that whatever she did would always meet with Your Excellency's approval, and I spoke thus only in general terms.³

This passage demonstrates that although there was to be no overt interference at this point in Giovanna's appointment of her courtiers, the Medici envoy was fully aware that the Duke might wish to intervene in arranging the composition of his wife's court and

² Three undated documents in the Medici archive describe the personnel who accompanied her. ASF, MdP 6355/A, pp. 10, 48, 56.

³ 'In vari ragionamenti da persone che intrinsecamente praticano con il Signor Maiordomo, et forse mandati sotto a posta, hanno fatto interrogazione che quando Sua Altezza eleggesse al servizio suo persona nessuna in officio o di maiordomo o cavallerizzo o altri simili offizi se io pensavo che fussino confermati et con buona soddisfazione di Vostra Eccellenza. Io che sopra di ciò non ho ordine nè commissione nessuna risposi che Sua Altezza haveva a esser padrona d'ogni cosa, et che credevo che quello la facesse havevse a essere sempre con buona soddisfazione di Vostra Eccellenza et la passai cosi in generale.' Tosi, 'Del matrimonio del principe Francesco', (p. 16).

who might be selected to form it. As with Eleonora, it is also questionable how much choice Giovanna herself had in selecting her courtiers. However, whether it was Giovanna herself or her father would have been less of an issue to the Medici – the heart of the problem lay in whether her court would be composed of people chosen by them or by the Habsburgs.

The Medici may have been amenable to a large contingent of Austro-German courtiers accompanying the young Duchess down to Florence as a public demonstration of the status and prestige of the bride. Issues were more likely to arrive when they confronted the question of who would stay and serve her in her new home. The evidence contained in the diary of a Bavarian courtier asserts that the main contingent of Giovanna's entourage left shortly after the wedding.⁴ Further evidence is provided by letters of safe conduct Giovanna wrote on behalf of some of her gentlemen and her servants, such as her chaplain and her litter bearers, upon their departure in January and February 1566, as well as certain letters contained in the archives in Vienna.⁵ The information provided by the latter also demonstrates that Giovanna was ultimately unable to assert her own wishes over those of her male relatives, whether Florentine or German, in the composition of her court. The young Duchess of Florence wrote to her brother the Archduke Ferdinand asking to retain the Count of Helfenstein, as both Cosimo and Francesco, she asserted, were willing to allow her to keep her German court with some suitable components for a while.⁶ However, Ferdinand wrote back demanding that the Count return immediately after the wedding, and the diary entries confirm that this is what occurred. Giovanna also wrote to her brother-in-law, Duke Albrecht of Bavaria, asking to keep the Count Eitel Friedrich von Zollern in her service. But again she was unsuccessful in her request.⁷ These letters highlight some of the obstacles the female consort might face in attempting to organise her own court and the multiple factors that could influence its composition. The Duchess' repeated requests also suggest that she may have been frightened at the thought of being abandoned in Florence and anxious to retain those with whom she had already formed relationships of mutual trust and loyalty.

⁴ Katritzky, 'The Florentine Entrata', (p. 155, note 69).

⁵ ASF, MdP 5927/A, Fascicolo 1, pp. 11, 21.

⁶ Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien, Ältere Ceremonialakten I, fol. 196r-197v. These references are taken from Hilda Lietzmann, 'Der florentinische Wagen: eine Kutsche für Giovanna d'Austria', *Munchner Jahrbuch der bildenden-Kunst*, LIV (2003), 151-81.

⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

Nevertheless, despite these indications that a large number of her personnel left her shortly after the wedding, further archival documents demonstrate that a significant proportion of her court did remain steadfastly Austro-German. The list of salaried members of the court compiled in March 1567, so over a year after her arrival in Florence, includes a variety of foreign names such as the two cup-bearers: Hans Albrecht, Baron von Sprinzenstein and Abraam Dantzel, elsewhere called ‘Tantzel’, as well as a number of German footmen.⁸ A significant number of Austrian women are also listed, including Giovanna’s stewardess, her head lady of the chamber Barbara d’Andrian, and the lady-in-waiting the Baroness von Sprinzenstein.⁹ Unfortunately, as the register contains the employees of both the Duke and the Duchess without any clear separation it is impossible to identify the members of her court with any surety, however it seems likely that those with patently foreign names predominantly belonged to her entourage rather than the Duke’s. In terms of identifying the Italian members of her court, it is even more problematic, but the list does include some Italian names definitely allocated to her court, while others certainly appear in her accounts, although at a later date, such as the doormen Rocco and Manno, the embroiderer Niccoló (who worked for Giovanna’s predecessor Eleonora de Toledo and was French), and her tailor *maestro* Agostino. There are also some ladies-in-waiting with Italian names, listed alongside the German women, such as Camilla Bartolini, Fortuna Saracini, Laura Semenza, Clarice Minucci and Camilla Arrighi. These names reveal a discreet number of Italian elements in her court, but they are definitely a minority compared to the Austro-German natives employed by Giovanna at the beginning of her sojourn in Florence; in 1567 their number stands at 25 compared to the 14 Italian names also listed in the same document who can be definitively placed in her court.

⁸ ASF, MdP 616, Inserto 16.

⁹ These figures appear in the archival documents with their names written in a variety of spellings. Generally attempts were made to Italianise the spellings. I have used their correct names whenever possible, but have otherwise provided the spelling given in the document.

Table of Giovanna's court in March 1567

Italian female members of court	Austro-German female members of court	Italian male members of court	Austro-German male members of court	Unidentified male members of court	Unidentified female members of court
Camilla Bartolini	Milsteterin, maiordoma ¹⁰ [head stewardess]	Giovanni Francesco Montemerlo	Hans Albrecht von Sprinzenstein coppiero [cup-bearer]	A staffiere [footman] for each lady-in-waiting	Maidservant of the head stewardess
Fortuna Saracini	Barbara d'Andrian, cameriera maggiore ¹¹	Ruberto Barbarescatore stable manager	Abraam Tantzel, cup-bearer	A servant for the balia [wet nurse]	Donzella della cameriera maggiore [maidservant]
Laura Semenza	Magdalene von Sprinzenstein, dama [lady-in-waiting]	Piero Damarradi, cocchiere [coachman] for the ladies-in-waiting	Lionardo Delder, aiuto di camera [chamber assistant]	A sotto-quoco [sous-chef]	The widow Lisabetta
Clarice Minucci	Laura Trauttmansdorff	Giuliano Fedini, scalco [carver] for the ladies-in-waiting	Christofano Hormpach, footman to Giovanna	Christofano, Cappellano [chaplain]	The widow Laura
Camilla Arrighi	Barbara Botsch von Zwingenberg	Pagolo Tartuglia, footman to Giovanna	Gio. Bolcho, footman to Giovanna	Gabriello, maestro dei paggi ¹² [master of the pages]	Giovanna's lavandara [washer-woman] with one assistant
Margherita Bertini	Dorothea da Termie		Cristofano ornapogho footman to Giovanna	Michele, apparecchiator e alle dame [table-setter for the ladies-in-waiting]	
Gemma Lottini, assistant to Margherita Bertini	Dorotea von Montfort		Christofano Aufer, footman to Giovanna	Niccoló francese, ricamatore [embroiderer]	
Baccia, wet nurse	Leonora Veingen		Gaspar Egler, footman to	Maestro Agostino,	

¹⁰ The *maiordoma* supervised the Duchess' wardrobe and the Duchess' apartments. Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna' (p. 92).

¹¹ The *cameriera maggiore* was in charge of the Duchess's private space, including her bedroom. She supervised the doormen, the *cameriera* and the pages, amongst others. Ibid.

¹² The *maestro dei paggi* was in charge of the pages' education and monitored their behaviour. Ibid.

			Giovanna	sarto [tailor] to Giovanna	
Francesca, assistant to the wet nurse	Marina Pernicherin, ministra di camera		Gio. Stichel, footman to Giovanna	Giorgio, footman	
	Anna Weldin, sotto ministra di camera		Christofano Martin, footman to Giovanna	Leonardo, footman to Giovanna	
	Domenica Zigher, cuoca [cook]		Lionardo Fidelmaier, footman to Giovanna		
	Anna Gislerin		Baldassar todesco [German], Bottigliere [official in charge of the cellar]		
	Caterina Strobelin				
	Maddalena Standin, servente [servant] to the ladies-in- waiting				

This table indicates that at the beginning, Giovanna's court had a definite foreign feel to it. In this way it can be compared with the Spanish-dominated court of her predecessor, the Duchess Eleonora de Toledo, who is described as having gathered a multitude of Spanish ladies, pages, courtiers and servants around her.¹³ Importantly, however, just as with her sister Barbara, although the Duchess was able to petition and request certain people to join her court, she did not have the final say in its composition. The letters of her Habsburg brothers and the phrasing of her letter to Ferdinand in which she tells him that she has been allowed to keep her German retinue indicates that such decisions rested with the male family members, and ultimately with the Duchess' new family: the Medici. This is confirmed by a letter dating to 1566 and kept in the Mantuan archive. Here the Duchess apologises for not being able to take on Pietrogiorgio Visconti's daughter as her husband Francesco says she has enough ladies-in-waiting as it is.¹⁴

Financial Arrangements

The individual financial situation of the female consort influenced and determined to a great extent her ability to wield patronage and extend influence. When Giovanna arrived in Florence, she was allocated rooms in the Palazzo Vecchio, which had been specially prepared for her arrival, newly painted with a series of murals depicting her native towns and countryside. Her husband also resided in the palace, although in separate

¹³ Vanna Arrighi, 'Eleonora de Toledo', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Società Grafica Romana, 1993), pp. 437-41 (p. 439).

¹⁴ 'Io non ho mancato di redurr' piu volte alla memoria al signor Principe mio, per servir' a Vostra Altezza, il desiderio del signor Pietrogiorgio Visconte di metter' qui una sua figliola per Dama. Ma l'esserne noi provisti in fino à hora di assai bon' numero è causa che non si è possuto metter' à effetto qualche io desideravo, di ricever' questa....' (I reminded my Lord the Prince more than once...of Sir Pietrogiorgio Visconte's desire to gain a place for his daughter as lady-in-waiting here: but since we have been provided with a goodly number (of ladies) already, it has not been possible to achieve what I desired, i.e. to take on this girl...). ASM, AG 1087, Fascicolo 5, p. 309. The wording of another letter dating to January 1567, again to Eleonora, can provide another implicit indication (Francesco is not actually mentioned this time) that the Duke may be intervening to control the composition of her court: 'Serenissima signora sorella Honorandissima. Giovanni Batista Marschwander, Consigliere del Serenissimo Signor Arciduca Ferdinando nostro fratello, mi ha pregato con molta instantia che io voglia ricever' nel numero de mei Paggi Giovanni sigismondo schoperle, Giovanetto di 15 anni, suo parente. In che non l'havendo io possuto gratificare, sendone provista per hora di assai bon' numero... vengo però a pregare l'Altezza Vostra con questa mia, si come la prego, quanto piu caldamente posso, che ella sia contenta per amor' mio di pigliar' Lei al suo servitio, il prefato Giovanni sigismondo...'. (Most Serene Lady most honorable sister, Giovanni Batista Marschwander, our most Serene brother Ferdinand's councillor, has begged me most earnestly to take into my group of pages, his relative, Giovanni Sigismondo Schoperle, a youth of fifteen. Since, however, I have not been able to grant his request, as I have already been provided with sufficient number...I am begging Your Highness, with this letter of mine, as earnestly as I can, to agree, for love of me, to take into your service the afore-mentioned Giovanni Sigismondo...). Ibid., p. 332.

apartments.¹⁵ The Duchess' living arrangements in her new residence were a considerable change from her previous life in Innsbruck, where she had lived with her sisters, while her father and brothers resided with their own courts in different cities. The Florentine court of the Medici was a relatively new institution. Cosimo had become Duke in 1537 and only moved into the palace from his private residence on the Via Larga in 1540. The Palazzo Vecchio itself had previously been the seat of the governing body of the Republic and Cosimo ensured that it retained its outside appearance, in order to minimise the effective transition of power that had taken place. The court was still a relatively small entity and although it had grown larger and more impressive from its initial nucleus of seven retainers in 1549,¹⁶ it was still a far smaller and a less rigidly defined space than Giovanna's natal court, which had been ruled by court ceremonial and a degree of formality suitable for the Emperor's daughters.¹⁷ Giovanna had her own ladies in waiting, male companions, chaplain and servants, from her house steward, footmen and doormen to her tailor and cook, and she lived in her own rooms; however, although on the surface she might appear to inhabit a parallel and fully independent environment from that of her husband, there were continual overlaps in the way that both were financed and run. This was not one of the more visibly autonomous and separate courts described as existing in Mantua by Guido Guerzoni,¹⁸ but something very much more amorphous.

One of the ways in which this is most clearly visible is in the financing of Giovanna's court. Giovanna was allocated a yearly provision of 10,000 *scudi*, paid monthly, alongside an extra settlement of 3,000 *scudi* paid yearly, to spend on the clothing of the ladies of her court.¹⁹ She was also entitled to interest payments of 5% on

¹⁵ A letter from the Ferrarese ambassador Rodolfo Conegrani dated to 21 April 1569 indicates that this was a long-term arrangement: 'tutta la sua famiglia [i.e. that of the visiting Archduke Charles] lo alloggiarano in pallazzo di piazza [Palazzo Vecchio] nelle stanze di Sua Altezza, et Sua Altezza si è ritirata nelle stanze di sopra del signor Duca'. (They will house his whole household in the Palazzo Vecchio in Her Highness' rooms, and Her Highness has moved into the Duke's rooms above). ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 22, Fascicolo 5, letter dated 21 April 1569.

¹⁶ Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 30. Francesco's court reached a total of 233 persons at his death, a gradual rise from the 168 employed at Cosimo's abdication in 1564.

¹⁷ Ferdinand's court had numbered between 275 and 300 people and in 1519 Maximilian's court had held 472 employees. Fichtner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 143. Although this was the central imperial court at Vienna, it is likely that the court at Innsbruck was also large, as befitted the Archduchesses' status.

¹⁸ Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna' (p. 90).

¹⁹ There has been a great deal of controversy and confusion over the matter of the sums paid to Giovanna. Guglielmo Saltini claims that she received 3,000 *scudi* a month, Saltini, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 133, and in this he is followed by later biographers such as Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 128. However, this is based on a misinterpretation of the sources. The documents contained in the Depositeria Generale state quite clearly that the sums of 3,000 *scudi* dispensed are meant to last for a year at a time: 'R 3000 alla Prefata Sua Altezza per il vestire delle dame e donne del suo servito per uno anno da finire per tutto

her dowry revenues, but the Medici never received the dowry payments from the Emperor. This meant that, unlike her predecessor, Eleonora de Toledo, Giovanna did not have an income apart from the allowance she was given by her husband. According to the terms stipulated in her marriage contract, Giovanna was to use her annual provision of 10,000 *scudi* 'for her own free use so that she may dispose of it as she wishes'.²⁰ This is a somewhat vague definition, nevertheless, it is possible, through an analysis of her correspondence and the accounts kept by the ducal court, to trace what she paid for out of her own allowance and what was instead paid for by the Duke's ministers and set within the budget intended for the general expenditure of the wider ducal court. As with the lists of Giovanna's retinue, the archival documentation appears conflicting at first.²¹ However, a letter dated after the death of the Duchess may contribute an explanation to these apparently contradictory sources:

Most Serene Grand Duke, Baldassare Haberli, once sommelier to the Most Serene Grand Duchess, tells Your Most Serene Highness [Francesco] that he has been dismissed from service and has decided to return to serve his Austrian lordships...the supplicant has shown me a warrant which he says he received from Her Most Serene Highness [Giovanna] signed in her hand, and it is in German, and will be included herein with a translation in Italian, which contains the information that Her Highness owes him ▼588, i.e. ▼278 for money lent to her and ▼210 for his salary for the last 42 months at ▼5 a month...which salary is

giugno proximo avenire'. (3,000 *scudi* to the said Highness for dressing the ladies and women who serve her for a year to end at the end of next June). On top of this she received various payments amounting to 10,000 *scudi* a year, listed in the Depositeria every six months: 'R 5357 y1 alla Serenissima Regina Giovanna d'Austria per valuta di ▼5mila d'oro in oro per le sue provisioni di 6 mesi finiti per tutto febraro paxato'. (5,357 *scudi* to Her Most Serene Highness Queen Giovanna of Austria equivalent to 5 thousand gold *scudi* for her provision of 6 months up to the end of last February) ASF, Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica 642, Fascicolo dated 1571-1572, p. 13. Further confusion has arisen very recently over whether the Duchess continued to receive her provision throughout her life - Lietzmann argues in her 2003 article that Giovanna was only paid her provision up to 1570 and after that it petered out, as her dowry was not forthcoming. See Lietzmann, 'Der florentinische Wagen: eine Kutsche für Giovanna d'Austria', (p. 156). This interpretation of events has been followed by other historians in recent talks on the Medici Duchesses, however Lietzmann provides no evidence to back up her claims and her theory can be disproved by further reference to the documents contained in the Depositeria Generale, 642 and 643, which demonstrate that Giovanna received her provision regularly and in full up to her death in 1578.

²⁰ 'pro libito suo uti et de illis disponere posset et valeat'. ASF, MM 16, Inserto 6, p. 33v.

²¹ The register of the salaried members of the court seems to suggest that Giovanna was not expected to pay for her own servants, as the document has the title: 'Role call of the household and provisioned members of His Excellency's retinue to be paid by Niccolò Soldani, payer of the salaries, to start the 1st of March 1566' [actually 1st March 1567, as the Florentine new year started on the 25th of March] (Rolo della casa e provisionati della Famiglia di Sua Eccellenza da pagarsi da Niccolò Soldani pagatore de salariati da cominciarsi il primo di marzo 1566) ASF, MdP 616, Inserto 19, p. 271r, together with the amounts due to each individual. However, the surviving documents containing the personal accounts the Duchess kept include a series of receipts which demonstrate that various members of her court did apply to her for payment of their provisions. See for example ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 368.

part of those provisions which Her Highness used to pay from her own money on top of the provision that Your Serene Highness [Francesco] gives...²²

This indicates that both Giovanna and Francesco paid provisions to the members of her court, and gives a clear indication that the female court was not considered, at least from a bureaucratic point of view, as a completely separate entity. This letter also demonstrates that although the compiled lists of court members make the transactions sound very well regulated, salaries were often paid late, reminders had to be sent, and courtiers could be forced to borrow from fellow courtiers to tide them over. An example of this is the request by Andrea, Giovanna's assistant sommelier, for the Duchess to pay the provision owed to him for the last 13 months (which amounted to 65 *lire*) to Giovanni Talenti, from whom he'd had to borrow the money in the meantime.²³

Apart from the salary, another key part of a courtier's remuneration was dress. The receipts kept in Giovanna's accounts demonstrate that she paid for clothing for her courtiers. However, again there is evidence that the Duke also participated to some extent in supplying members of her court with necessary items. This is an example of the Duke's intervention in the female consort's domestic patronage – an area which Kettering argues in the case of France, was normally left to the woman.²⁴ The documents held in the *Depositeria* state that Giovanna was allocated a specific sum of 3,000 *scudi* a year to pay for clothing the ladies and women of her court. However, nothing is mentioned about the men who were in her service. If one were going to argue that the male and female court were separate entities, then one might assume that the Duchess might be in charge of providing clothing for the entirety of her court. The court, as Marcello Fantoni has pointed out, was the key space where the power of the ruler was displayed and his relationships with those beneath him were articulated through a series of clearly recognised signals, conveyed through court-ceremonial, gift-

²² 'Serenissimo Gran Duca.

Baldassare Haberli, già Bottigliere della Serenissima Gran Duchessa, expone a Vostra Altezza Serenissima esser stato licenziato dal servitio et che s'è risoluto tornare a servire li sua Padroni di Casa d'Austria... il supplicante mi mostra una cedola che dice havere havuta da Sua Altezza Serenissima sottoscritta di sua propria mano, et è in lingua todesca et sarà qui inclusa insieme con una translatione di essa in lingua italiana la quale contiene che Sua Altezza li resta debitrice di ▼.di 588 cioe ▼.di 278 per denari prestati e ▼.di 210 per suo salario di mesi quarantadua a ▼.di 5 il mese...quanto al salario sono di quelle provisione che pagava Sua Altezza di sua borsa oltre alle provisione che da Vostra Altezza Serenissima...'. ASF, Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica 643, Fascicolo dated 1577-1578, p. 818.

²³ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, p. 181.

²⁴ Sharon Kettering, 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *The Historical Journal*, 32.4 (1989), 817-41, (p. 818).

giving and clothing.²⁵ Food and dress provided a highly visible means of both ranking members of the court and highlighting their dependence from the duke or duchess from whom they received such goods. Fantoni also pointed out that:

Clothing the members of one's own 'household' and fulfilling all their material needs is an unavoidable duty of the *dominus*, whose personal relationship with his own servants includes specific reciprocal bonds and obligations.²⁶

Given all this, providing the livery for pages and footmen would seem to be a key method of demonstrating one's position at the top of a specific court hierarchy, and of articulating the relationship of patronage in exchange for service and loyalty between ruler and courtier. Fantoni gives an example of a coachman in the service of the Grand Duke Cosimo III giving back his old pink livery and taking on a black one as he was now entering the service of the Dowager Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere. He uses this as a demonstration of how a servant visually changed allegiances when switching from one court to another.²⁷ However, this does not seem to have occurred in Giovanna's court. There are no indications in her accounts that she issued her pages and footmen with liveries, and instead, the pages and footmen who served under either Giovanna or Francesco appear to have been provided with clothing in Francesco's colours of turquoise and silver.²⁸ It is possible that Giovanna paid for them nonetheless but their absence from her personal accounts suggests not. However, whether or not she did so, this is an important example of the way in which the Duke's position and influence manifestly interfered and crossed over into what has up to now been seen as a separate entity. This is another indication of the fluid boundaries between the courts and the lack of a defined space in which Giovanna was sole and unopposed head of her court. The reason why Giovanna's court appears to have been less autonomous than her sister Eleonora's may again lie in the relatively early stage of development of Cosimo and Francesco's court. The Venetian ambassador's description of the arrangements set in place at the Florentine court under Cosimo and Eleonora can be usefully paralleled with the financial arrangements established for Giovanna's court.²⁹ While Francesco did not always eat with Giovanna, he did do so on various occasions and she shared her

²⁵ Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, see especially his chapter entitled: 'Il dono: liberalità e potere'.

²⁶ 'Vestire i membri della propria 'familia' e mantenerli in tutti i loro bisogni materiali costituisce un ineludibile dovere del *dominus*, il cui rapporto personale con i propri servitori si allarga a comprendere precisi vincoli e obblighi reciproci'. Fantoni, 'Le corti e i 'modi' del vestire' (p. 738).

²⁷ Ibid., p. 743.

²⁸ ASF, GM 61, pp. 55r, 61r.

²⁹ See chapter one, note 97.

living and household expenses with other members of the extended Medici family for substantial periods of time. So, for example, the Ferrarese ambassador Rodolfo Conegrani reported to the Duke of Ferrara that:

The Lady Lionora and Don Pietro...are now housed in the Palace, and they always eat with the Prince and with Her Highness [Giovanna] and the Lady Lionora's women eat with Her Highness', so that up to now they all have one household and one set of expenses.³⁰

This indicates that although officially, Giovanna was supposed to pay for her own food and that of her courtiers,³¹ in reality arrangements could be far less concrete. The fact that the ambassador specifies that Don Pietro and Donna Leonora are now staying in the Palazzo (i.e. Palazzo Vecchio) is another indication of the lack of a stable physical court epicentre. Francesco himself lived a very peripatetic life, often away from Florence at his various villas while his father Cosimo resided either in the countryside, in Pisa, or when he was in Florence, at the Pitti. All this gives us a far more nuanced vision of the way in which the various courts operated financially and the fluidity of the arrangements that were set in place for providing for the courtiers' upkeep and those of the minor members of the ducal family. It also demonstrates the variations that could exist between different female courts and the variety of factors the various models depended on. In the case of Florence, the lack of a distinct binary financial and patronage relationship between the female consort and the members of her court could have serious consequences and affect the consort's choices in relation to gift-giving and consumption.

Patronage and Loyalty: Courtly Relationships

The Duchess paid monthly, or at least regular, allowances to those in her service, although as we have seen, payments could be backdated by almost a year.³² However, being a courtier was not a purely financial transaction for services rendered. A courtier engaged in a gift and favour dialogue with his or her patron or patroness, alongside the regular financial provisions. Often the financial retribution itself was minimal, especially for women.³³ However, the position itself could, if well-managed, be

³⁰ See Appendix 3, letter dated 4 April 1573.

³¹ This is one of the terms stipulated in her marriage contract. ASF, MM 16, Inserto 6, p. 24.

³² Madonna Baccia and Maddalena de'Bardi are present in the lists of receipts requesting payment of the last eleven months of their provision. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 420.

³³ Many of Giovanna's ladies are awarded a salary of two *scudi* a month, half of what her footmen received. ASF, MdP 616, Inserto 19, p. 274r. The salary given to Eleonora d'Austria's daughter, Anna

extremely rewarding in other ways. It was the duty of the head of the court for which the servant worked to reward good service and loyalty by distributing wealth and favours in return – the aim was to forge a relationship which would benefit both parties.³⁴ Like her two sisters, Giovanna interceded on behalf of her courtiers and she also extended her efforts to include her courtiers' families. So, for example, Giovanna wrote to her brother Ferdinand, interceding with him to free a certain Doctor Matteo del Ben di Rovereto, currently in prison, as he was married to the sister of one of her ladies, a certain Dorothea di Hieremia. Giovanna clearly explained in her prelude to the request that she was operating on behalf of Dorothea because of 'the good and faithful service that she has always given us and still gives'.³⁵ As this letter proves, although the primary aim might be seen as establishing a relationship of loyalty and service between two people, courtier and patron, in actual fact, the relationship could and did expand to include the whole family on both sides. Therefore, positions at court were sought in order to benefit the courtier's family as a whole:

My other children...will be pleased, seeing you go where, if you behave fittingly, as we hope, you will bring both yourself and them profits and honour...³⁶

Caterina Gonzaga's *cameriera* in 1579 was 4.13 *lire* a month, while the *cameriere* assigned to her son Vincenzo, also in 1579, was awarded a salary of 16.5 *lire* a month. ASM, Magistrato Ducale Antico Bb.IV, Filza 2, pp. 21, 25.

³⁴ A cogent example of the favours patrons did for their servants is contained in a letter from Giovanna to Cosimo in which she asks him to take action on behalf of her daughter Anna's nurse, to give her (the nurse) half of a house, and to allow her a space of time in which to find the money to buy the other half. ASF, MdP 5926, p. 117. Letter dated 25th November 1572: 'La Emilia Balia della Principessa Anna mia figliuola, et Nipote di Vostra Altezza desidererebbe ch'ella le concedessi indono la metà di quella casa, che serviva già per l'Arte delli Spetiali... et l'altra metà s'offerisce pagare ... quando però le ne fussi fatto un poco di tempo, poiche non ha per adesso molto il modo. Et perche in questa nurratura di quella figliuolina s'è portata con quella vigilanza, diligenza, et amorevolezza possibile, da restarne molto soddisfatta, Vostra Altezza m'havera per iscusata, s'io la prego a farle questa mercede...'. (Emilia, the nurse of the Princess Anne my daughter, and Your Highness' granddaughter, wishes you to give her as a gift half of that house which was previously used by the Guild of Apothecaries... and she offers to pay for the other half... as long as she is given a bit of time, as she has not the means to do so at the moment. And because in nursing this little girl of mine, she has behaved with all vigilance, diligence and care, so that I am much pleased with her, Your Highness will forgive me if I ask you to grant this favour to her...).

³⁵ 'La bona et fedel servitù che ci ha fatto in fino a qui, et fa continuamente la Dorothea di Hieremia...'. ASF, MdP 5927/A, Fascicolo 2, p. 92.

³⁶ 'gli altri figliuoli miei...se ne contenteranno; vedendoti in luogo andare, dove facendo tu dal canto tuo quello, che si conviene, e che noi speriamo, sei per riportarne a te, et a loro utile, et honore...'. Annibale Guasco, *Discourse to Lady Lavinia his daughter: concerning the manner in which she should conduct herself when going to court as lady-in-waiting to the Most Serene Infanta, Lady Caterina, Duchess of Savoy*, ed. by Peggy Osborn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 9r-9v.

This appears to have been the case in France as well as Italy: see Sharon Kettering, 'The Household Service of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *French Historical Studies*, 20.1 (1997), 55-85, (pp. 56-57, 62-63).

Once one member was installed, positions for other family members could be arranged, and favours asked. So, for example, a letter from the Archbishop of Florence to Giovanna explained that, although because of the poverty of the Convent of San Traiano, he had decided not to allow them to receive any nuns except those from noble families, as the girl in question was the sister of one of Giovanna's servants, the musician Giulio, he would approve her request for acceptance into the convent.³⁷ Elsewhere, providing an example of the networks that Giovanna and her sisters set up, the Duchess was asked to intervene by her sister Eleonora who sent her a letter on behalf of Camillo Guidi di Bagno, asking her to plead with the Duke Francesco to ensure that a case being brought against Camillo by the Convent of Saint Stephen would be quashed. Two excerpts from her letter prove the value to the wider clan of having a family member in service at court:

The longstanding service that the family of the Counts Guidi da Bagno has held with this House of Gonzaga, and that it still holds with my Lord the Duke, entails that the gentlemen of that family have always deserved the said my Lord's protection.

And

Their [the Counts'] honour and reputation must also be dear to Your Highness' [Giovanna's] heart as not only his mother but the Marquis of Montebello, who is from the same family, are in your service.³⁸

By benefitting not only their own immediate clients, i.e. their courtiers, but also their wider families, the Duchesses could strengthen their reputations and establish broader networks of contacts upon whom they might be able to rely on for loyalty and potential favours in return.

Successful patronage relationships might also continue after the courtier had left active service. Magdalene von Sprinzenstein, most frequently known as Maddalena Princistana in the accounts, came down to Florence with Giovanna and stayed as her lady-in-waiting until November 1570, when she married Scipione Piccolomini.³⁹ After her marriage she no longer appears in the documents, which suggests that she no longer

³⁷ ASF, MdP 5925, p. 466.

³⁸ 'L'antica servitù che la famiglia de Conti Guidi da Bagno ha tenuta con questa Casa Gonzaga, et che tutt'hora tiene col signor Duca mio, ha meritato che i Gentilhuomini d'essa famiglia sieno sempre stati tenuti in protettione dal detto signor mio'. And 'L'honore et riputatione de quali deve pur esser' a cuore a Vostra Altezza poiche al suo servitio si trova, oltre la Madre, il Marchese di Montebello, che è pur della medesima famiglia'. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 156.

³⁹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 11 November 1570.

resided at court. This was part of the normal process of court life. There is similar evidence from the *Guardaroba* accounts to suggest that the Countess Isabella d'Arco (from a noble family from the province of Trent) also retired from court after her marriage. However, even after leaving court they could still maintain an ongoing relationship with their patroness, and if their husbands died, they might return to service: the Ferrarese ambassador notes that upon the death of Giulio da Pistoia, the husband of Laura Semenza, one of Giovanna's ladies named in the 1567 list of court members, the Duchess had immediately gone to see her and it was thought that she might return to court.⁴⁰ The fact that Giovanna went to see Laura and asked her to resume her old position is highly significant. It indicates that Giovanna did not constantly hide within an exclusively German entourage, as previous scholars such as Riguccio Galluzzi have asserted,⁴¹ but rather that she actively engaged with and invested in relationships with Italian members of her court and was interested in becoming a patron to Italian as well as German courtiers. In favouring her Italian courtiers as well as her German ones, Giovanna diverged from the practice seemingly espoused by her sister Barbara, who markedly favoured her German retainers. This may have resulted from Giovanna's greater need to retain her courtiers' affection and loyalty because of her more problematic situation at court.

Courtiers could also benefit from the expectation that the Duchess, as a patron, would provide dowries and arrange marriages for her ladies. We have seen evidence of Barbara and Eleonora engaging in this activity; Giovanna's *Guardaroba* accounts,⁴² together with letters and reports by the Ferrarese ambassador show that she too was an active participant in the creation of marriage networks. The following table charts the marriages that Giovanna arranged:

Table of Marriages Arranged by Giovanna

Date	Bride	Groom
1567	Barbara Traap, Countess	Sigismondo de' Rossi,

⁴⁰ ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 23, Fascicolo 3, letter dated 16 Feb 1572. An unidentified signora Laura, who may be Laura Semenza, also appears repeatedly in Giovanna's *Guardaroba* accounts, receiving gifts such as a dress for her little girl, or ivory thimbles, ASF, GM, Filza 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, pp. 135v, 152r. This suggests that a strong friendship may have existed between the Duchess and her Italian lady-in-waiting.

⁴¹ Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 77, and Galluzzi, *Storia del granducato*, p. 79.

⁴² A receipt dated 4th of September 1573 from Scipione Piccolomini states that he had received a dowry payment of one thousand *scudi* out of the two thousand that Giovanna had promised to pay for the dowry of Magdalene von Sprinzenstein. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1573, p. 478.

	and lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Count of San Secondo. Diplomat and one of Francesco's favoured companions. ⁴³
1567	Laura Semenza, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Giulio Brunozzi, gentleman carver. ⁴⁴
1569	Laura <i>tedesca</i> . Perhaps Laura Trauttmansdorff, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Cesio d'Amenio, gentleman carver to Francesco. ⁴⁵
1570	Magdalene von Sprinzenstein, Austrian Baroness and lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Scipione Piccolomini, nobleman from the Sienese Piccolomini family. ⁴⁶
1570	Dorotea von Montfort, Baroness of Spaur and lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Camillo degli Albizzi, courtier and later ambassador in Ferrara. ⁴⁷
1573	Clarice Minucci, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court and sister of Girolamo Minucci, Francesco's cup-bearer.	Alessandro Arrighi, courtier and son of Giovanni di Bernardo Arrighi, courtier and diplomat. ⁴⁸
1573	Leonora, a German lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Lorenzo Battaglini (Neapolitan Baron). ⁴⁹
1573	Barbara Botsch von Zwingenberg, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Hans Albrecht von Sprinzenstein. Baron and member of Giovanna's court. ⁵⁰

⁴³ See Appendix 3, letter dated 5 February 1567.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 3, letter dated 17 May 1567.

⁴⁵ See Appendix 3, letter dated 5 February 1569.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 3, letter dated 11 November 1570.

⁴⁷ See Appendix 3, letter dated 2 December 1570.

⁴⁸ See Appendix 3, letter dated 13 June 1573.

⁴⁹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 24 October 1573. Lorenzo Battaglini does not appear to have played an active role at the Medici court, but his brother Giulio was provided with a place in Ferdinando de' Medici's household through Giovanna's intervention subsequent to the marriage in 1573. *Istruzioni agli ambasciatori e inviati medicei in Spagna e nell' "Italia spagnola" (1536-1648)*, ed. by Francesco Martelli and Cristina Galasso (Florence: Edifir-Edizioni, 2007), II, p. 69, note 10. He later asked Giovanna to be godmother to his child by Leonora: ASF, MdP 5923, p. 364.

⁵⁰ See Appendix 3, letter dated 26 October 1573.

1573	Fortuna Saracini, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Unknown Sieneſe gentleman. ⁵¹
1574	Isabella d'Arco, Counteſſ and lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Alfonſo Appiani d'Aragona, brother of the Lord of Piombino and Knight of St Stephen. ⁵²
1575	Camilla Arrighi, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Cavaliere Biffoli. No known court role. ⁵³
1576	Maria Nobili, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Bettino Ricasoli. No known court role. ⁵⁴
1577	Cassandra Rucellai, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Unknown. ⁵⁵
1578	Francesca Malegonnelle, lady-in-waiting in Giovanna's court.	Unknown. ⁵⁶

This evidence, although incomplete, can be used to trace a ſhift in the marriage policy Giovanna undertook during her life in Florence. At firſt, Giovanna appears to follow a ſtrategy of cooperation with her huſband and a generally pro-Medici ſtance: the firſt marriage takes place between one of Giovanna's German ladies-in-waiting and the Count of San Secondo, who had been an envoy to the courts of Vienna and Innsbruck during the marriage negotiations, and is later deſcribed by Conegrani as a highly favoured companion of Francesco.⁵⁷ The ſecond is between an Italian lady-in-waiting, Laura Semenza, and Giulio Brunoſſi, a Medici courtier who held the poſts of ſquire and then carver, while the third is between another Laura, this time German, and another member of the Medici court, Francesco's perſonal carver Ceſio d'Amenio. The poſition of carver (*ſcalco*) was one of high ſocial ſtatus: Duke Ferdinand I's carver was alſo a Knight of St Stephen and a Florentine ſenator. The carver's poſition gave him the privilege of being physically cloſe to the ruler, which was a ſituation of very high value

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See Appendix 3, letter dated 22 May 1574.

⁵³ ASF, GM 89, Memoriale dei Manifattori, p. 66v.

⁵⁴ ASF, GM 89, Memoriale dei Manifattori, p. 110v.

⁵⁵ ASF, GM 98, Memoriale dei Manifattori, p. 59r.

⁵⁶ ASF, GM 98, Memoriale dei Manifattori, p. 204r.

⁵⁷ ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 22, Fascicolo 5, letter dated 5 february 1567 and 23, Fascicolo 7, letter dated 3 July 1574.

at court.⁵⁸ These marriages are followed by others, still between Giovanna's ladies and Medici courtiers or men who were closely allied to the family, such as the courtier and later diplomat, Camillo degli Albizzi, and Alessandro Arrighi, the son of the princesses' tutor, Giovanni Arrighi, who had also held the post of Francesco's carver and his equerry. The festivities that marked these marriages are chronicled by the Ferrarese ambassador, Rodolfo Conegrani:

Yesterday morning Her Highness [Giovanna], together with their Excellencies [Cosimo and Francesco] held a banquet, to which they invited some gentlewomen married to these courtiers, in honour of the Lady Laura Somenza [Semenza], and after eating they danced until the evening and His Excellency paid her the compliment of dancing with her and truly all these gentlemen have honoured her greatly, and in the evening she went home with her husband accompanied by many gentlemen and gentlewomen.⁵⁹

This extract demonstrates that these celebrations operated both to honour the married couple, as Conegrani points out, but also to emphasise the centrality of the court and the patron in the courtiers' lives. The banquet takes place in the palace and all the arrangements are sponsored by one or more members of the ruling family.⁶⁰ This is a clear policy adopted by the Medici, as by other dukes across Italy and beyond (the Emperor is also involved in arranging marriages⁶¹) in order to control the noble families in their territory and supervise the alliances they might make.

At first Giovanna's actions indicate that she is operating strategically together with her male family members:

The Prince [and] Her Highness [Giovanna] have married the [Lady] Semenza to Messer Giulio da Pistoia [Giulio Brunozzi], his/her[*suo*] carver...His Excellency [Cosimo] and Her Highness appeared not to give her to him very willingly, and they had to be begged before they agreed to do so.⁶²

This clearly reveals a working partnership between the Medici in arranging suitable alliances for their courtiers. However, while the examples provided above might indicate healthy relationships between the male and female courts in Florence, a few

⁵⁸ Daniela Ferrari, 'La famiglia Arrighi tra città e corte gonzaghesca', in *'Famiglia' del Principe e famiglia aristocratica*, ed. by Cesare Mozzarelli (Rome: Bulzoni, 1988), pp. 471-85 (p. 480).

⁵⁹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 27 August 1567.

⁶⁰ Ibid., letter dated 23 August 1567.

⁶¹ Fichtner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 143.

⁶² See Appendix 3, letter dated 17 May 1567. There is some confusion as to whose carver Giulio was. The list of salaried members of court indicates only his function (carver) and not who he worked for: ASF, MdP 616, Inserto 19, p. 271r.

years later, another report by Conegrani about a different wedding reveals how the situation had deteriorated, and the impact of this disunity on Giovanna's court activities. The ambassador's letter chronicles the problems that arose with the marriage arrangements of the Baron von Sprinzenstein:⁶³

Yesterday morning they held the wedding and marriage of Sprinzenstein with that German lady of Her Highness'[Giovanna]... and a German gentleman has arrived here, who is Sprinzenstein's brother in law... and the said Sprinzenstein has persuaded His Majesty [the Emperor] to grant him the honour of making this man his [the Emperor's] representative at this wedding, but this gentleman has come here without bringing letters [of introduction] for the Duke [Cosimo] or for the Prince [Francesco], but he did bring them for Her Highness, who I have heard has accepted him as His Majesty's ambassador and has had him lodged in Bishop Antinori's house, and the Prince not having received any letters has shown that he knows nothing about it, and he refused to attend the wedding, the banquet or anything and did not want to hear anything about it and he washed his hands of it completely, and he has left Her Highness to take care of everything. The said Sprinzenstein then had letters arrive from the Most Serene Archduke Charles, and from the Duke of Saxony, and from the Duke of Bavaria, and from the Duchess of Mantua to these gentlemen whom Your Excellency will see arranged in order around the table which is included [Figure 10] and they all gave gifts to the bride in the name of those princes whom they represented ... I heard that the Prince [Francesco] didn't want to know anything about it, as I said above, and that Her Highness wanted to give the principle places to these gentlemen who represented the persons of these Dukes.⁶⁴

Conegrani's report highlights a clash between the Habsburgs and the Medici, and emphasises the problems that could arise because of the peculiar nature of the female consort's identity as member of two families: natal and marital. The Duchesses might often face dilemmas over which family to support, as the Emperor came into conflict with the Italian dynasties on more than one occasion. In Mantua, for example, there was ongoing strife over the possible allocation of certain titles such as 'Serenissimo' to Guglielmo, which the Emperor was refusing to do. Eleonora chose to act firmly on behalf of her husband, sending a letter to the Emperor exhorting him to agree to

⁶³ The Baron Hans Albrecht von Sprinzenstein was the brother of Giovanna's lady-in-waiting Magdalene von Sprinzenstein, named as cup-bearer in the 1567 list of salaried members of court (ASF, MdP 616, Inserto 19, p. 271v.), and the recipient of a provision from the Duchess in 1572: ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 451.

⁶⁴ See Appendix 3, letter dated 26 October 1573.

Guglielmo's use of the titles,⁶⁵ and consistently presenting a united front with him in his relationship with her native family.⁶⁶ She may have chosen to do so in order to ensure that she might enjoy a relationship with her husband that enabled her to promote herself successfully as a patron and mediator. Giovanna, however, does not seem to have acted in such wholehearted support of her husband. Instead, in this episode, she seems to signal that her primary allegiances were with her native family rather than the Medici by accepting the German gentleman and carrying on with the wedding arrangements despite her husband's obvious disapproval. This acquiescence, however, may have in part resulted from pressure on the part of her Habsburg relatives. I have already discussed the frequent attempts by husbands to interfere in the composition of their wives' courts. Here we have an example of the reasons behind such attempts as we can see the Emperor endeavouring to control events and extend his patronage in another ruler's court, operating through his sister, and transforming a ceremony that would normally celebrate the power and control of the Medici into an episode of extended Habsburg patronage. Nevertheless, despite the pressure Giovanna may have received from members of her court who were loyal to Habsburg interests, and from her brother himself, she may have had her own reasons too for choosing to side with her native family, unlike her sister Eleonora. By the time this report was sent in 1573, Francesco's affair with Bianca was publicly known and condemned by the Duchess and she appears to be no longer committed to following a common policy with her husband. Thus, instead of creating alliances with Medici courtiers, here we see her arranging a marriage between two Austro-German nobles who were both already within her court. The Sprinzenstein marriage and those that followed suggest a slackening of interest in trying to establish liaisons with the Florentines, and with those in her husband's employ. Fortuna Saracini married an unknown Sienese gentleman, and the Countess of Arco was married to Alfonso, brother of the Lord of Piombino, who, while repeatedly employed by the Medici in military matters, was not a Florentine resident nor a member of the Medici court.⁶⁷ The Countess' marriage is the last reported by Conegrani and evidence

⁶⁵ ASM, AG 426, p. 388.

⁶⁶ ASM, AG 2147, fascicolo VII, p. 474. 'Serenissimo signor e consort mio carissimo.

A desso in questa hora cha 21 15 e venuto un coriero dal archi duca ferdinan mio signor fradelo el qual me a portato questo litere la qual io manto a Vostra Altezza, manto ancho la mia aciohe Vostra Altezza veda quel che me scrive...'. (Most Serene and Dear Consort. A courier has just arrived now, at a quarter past nine in the evening, from my brother the Archduke Ferdinand, bringing me this letter which I am sending to Your Highness together with mine, so that Your Highness may see what he has been writing to me).

⁶⁷ See Appendix 3, letter dated 13 February 1574.

for the other reported weddings relies on the far more slender records kept in the *Guardaroba*. However, these too suggest a gradual abandonment of a strategy of creating links with Francesco and his courtiers as the relationship between the spouses deteriorated. Camilla Arrighi was married to the *Cavaliere* Biffoli, who may be a certain Francesco Biffoli who resided in Naples, but does not appear to have any court role, and Maria Nobili was married to Bettino Ricasoli, who was sent by Archduke Ferdinand to fight the Turks with Rudolph II, which indicates that he was closely involved with Giovanna's native family.⁶⁸

Despite the appearance of a withdrawal from a common strategy in which the Medici spouses cooperated, the evidence cited above also indicates that Giovanna did not abandon her attempts to establish marriage links. Rather than retire from her role and duties as Duchess, she chose to assert herself independently from her husband as an autonomous operator, continuing to create networks of patronage and support with which she might sustain her own position at court. This approach was paralleled in her gift-giving and consumption practices as I will document in chapter six. However, once it was publicly visible that the relationship between the ruling spouses was conflicted, there is no doubt that the Duchess' ability to extend patronage successfully could be severely affected. It may well be that courtiers close to Francesco were hesitant to ally themselves to Giovanna's ladies, given the increasingly problematic relations between the spouses. An indication that even those outside the household were hesitant to do so may be found in the letter from the Lord of Piombino, Alfonso's brother Jacopo, in which he pointedly writes that Alfonso had kept the news of the planned engagement from him right up to the last minute, but that seeing that it was being arranged by Giovanna herself, he could not but approve it.⁶⁹ The tone is courteous, but hardly overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Jacopo may not have wanted his brother to ally himself

⁶⁸ ASF, GM 89, pp. 66v, 110v.

⁶⁹ ASF, MdP 5924, p. 47: 'Rispondendo a l'amorevol lettera di Vostra Altezza Serenissima, le dirò havere inteso da' ogni altra persona, che da' Alfonso il Parentado che si trattava fra la Signora Isabella d'Arco et lui; eccetto che quando venne ultimamente a Gavinana me lo disse, vedendo non posseva più celarlo; onde intendendo che era trattato da Vostra Altezza Serenissima non possei se non approvarlo...' (In response to Your Most Serene Highness' warm letter, I will say that I had heard from everyone except Alfonso the news of the kinship that was being arranged between the Lady Isabella d'Arco and him, except that when he last came to Gavinana, he told me about it, seeing that he could no longer hide it; and since I understand that it was arranged by Your Highness, I cannot but give my consent to it...). The writer appears to be Jacopo VI Appiano, Lord of Piombino and Alfonso is his half-brother, the illegitimate son of Jacopo V Appiano, ex-Lord of Piombino. Isabella was the daughter of Scipione d'Arco, described by Giacomo Soranzo, in 1562, the Venetian ambassador to Germany, as Ferdinand's *Cameriere Maggiore*. *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, ed. by Luigi Firpo (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1968), III (Germania), p. 277. Giovanna was also in regular and friendly contact with the Lady of Piombino, Virginia Fieschi, who was married to Jacopo VI.

with Giovanna, and Alfonso may have known this, which is why he allowed his brother to find out through gossip rather than confronting him himself.

Jacopo's response contrasts strongly with that of an unknown Girolamo Landi, who effusively thanks Giovanna for arranging his marriage to Virginia, the daughter of Niccoló Passerini.⁷⁰ We know that Niccoló Passerini had been a captain, up to 1559, in the pay of the Medici and was the nephew of Cardinal Passerini, but Girolamo Landi himself appears not to have been a part of the Medici court – the letter in fact comes from Todi, a town in the region of Umbria under the control of the Pope. His letter shows that not everyone was displeased to be a recipient of Giovanna's patronage and networking activities by the later years of her life in Florence, but it does confirm the idea that by this point Giovanna was not marrying her ladies to important members of court. Furthermore, a final letter dated to March 1577, reveals that although not universally unpalatable, Giovanna was facing increasing resistance in her marriage negotiations. The letter is reported below:

The favour that Your Highness [Giovanna] has done me of writing and sending the Marquis of Montebello to speak to me on your behalf has been so great that I will always remember it and will always remain most obliged and, in reply to what you have deigned to command me, I answer that this is not the first time that the knight Armodio has been proposed to me, and having been informed then that he was not very rich, I replied that I did not wish to marry, and I thought this might be enough to exclude him, but now the respect and reverence that I have for such great persuasion, proffered with such effectiveness and with such lordly manners by the Marquis, have made me withdraw my refusal and state that for this reason I would never dare to expressly exclude him, in order not to contradict Your Highness. But for now I do not think I can say more, if not to warn you that I have been sought amongst others by the Most Illustrious Cardinal San Sisto to marry me to one of his own, and I have replied to him that when I am ready to marry I will go to him first, nor will I do anything without informing him in the hope that he will support me in whichever direction I turn, and I do not think I can back out of this arrangement. Furthermore, to speak freely, I have now been sought by yet another and negotiations are still going forward, and I do not think it would be honest to give my word to another until I see first what the conclusion of this is, and if this, by God's good will, turns out successfully, then I need say

⁷⁰ ASF, MdP 5924, p. 128. The author writes of his very great fortune in making such a marriage, and his incredible satisfaction at marrying a protégé of Giovanna's. A certain *Cavaliere* Passerino was also Ferdinando de' Medici's *cameriere* in 1573 and his sister, unfortunately unnamed, was a member of Giovanna's court - this may be this same Virginia. Ibid., p. 9.

no more if not that in that case I will consider my options, and since I have no more to say...⁷¹

The author, Meldina Cattanei, is again polite but firm in her assertion that she will not marry Giovanna's choice of suitor and she reveals that the Duchess faces a more successful rival for the role of patron in the Cardinal of San Sisto, who, Meldina asserts, will be her first port of call when she does decide to marry. The letter clearly reveals that by 1577, following the effective break-down of her relationship with her husband, Giovanna was not considered powerful enough to warrant obeisance. Meldina chose to ally herself with a patron who could prove a more effective supporter.

Patronage at Court: Courtiers as Intermediaries and Representatives

In one of his last entries on the weddings that took place between Giovanna's ladies and various members of the Italian nobility, Conegrani added that the Duchess had, with these final arrangements, married off the last of her German ladies.⁷² This demonstrates that although Giovanna may have come down with a large contingent of native companions, these were gradually replaced, as women mostly did not stay on at court after marriage. During the years that these women and those who replaced them were in service, however, they had certain duties and undertook certain activities for the Duchess in return for her patronage, and the salaries, dowries and clothing she gave them.

The receipts contained in the *Guardaroba* files provide evidence of daily life at the Florentine court and can shed a degree of light on some of the duties that Giovanna's ladies in waiting fulfilled. Since they are *Guardaroba* receipts they mostly deal with activities relating to the buying of textiles, jewellery, and other portable

⁷¹ 'Il favor' che mi ha fatto l'Altezza Vostra nel degnarsi di scrivermi, et farmi parlare in nome suo al Signor Marchese di Montebello, è stato tanto che ne terrò memoria in perpetuo et gli ne resterò sempre obligatissima, et in risposta di quanto ella s'è degnata di commandarmi gli dico ch'altre volte m'è stato proposto il Cavaliero Armodio, et informata al'hora che non era molto facoltoso, risposi che non mi volea maritare, et credetti che questo bastasse per escluderlo. Hora il rispetto et Riverenza ch'io porto à tanta persuasione espostami con tanta efficacia et con modi veramente signorili dal signor Marchese m'hà fatto revocare l'esclusione et dirli che per questo non ardirei mai d'escluderlo espressamente, per non contradir' all'Altezza Vostra, ma per hora non mi par' di poterle dir'altro, se non avvertirla che ricercata tra gli altri signori dall'Illustrissimo signor Cardinale San Sisto di volermi maritare ad un suo, gl'ho fatto rispondere che quando io sarò risoluta di maritarmi farò capo con lui, ne senza saputa sua farò cosa alcuna con speranza che m'abbia a consolare ove io inclinarò, però non mi par di poter rimuovermi da questo. Di poi per dirla liberamente hora sono stata ricercata da un'altro et tutta via si tratta, e però non mi par honesto di poter dar'parole ad altri finche non ne vedo il successo, il quale si piacerà alla bontà d'Iddio che habbia effetto non occorrerà dir'altro, se ancho non, alhora penserò alli casi miei, ne mi occorrendo dir altro...'. ASF, MdP 5927, p. 13.

⁷² See Appendix 3, letter 24 October 1573.

fashion items, their delivery and collection and providing the necessary payments, although they also contain evidence of occasional gambling debts, receipts of payment to *provisionati* at her court, and frequent almsgiving. One of the advantages for my work is that the contents of these files clearly demonstrate that the women, including women of high lineage and noble birth, were not at Giovanna's side purely for companionship; they appear to have been involved in the daily business of running this sector of court life, and there is evidence that they had the opportunity of going outside the court and coming into contact with members of the wider Florentine community. Unfortunately it is impossible to tell a great deal about the communication that they may have had with those outside the palace walls, but the receipts do prove that Giovanna did not live in isolation in a German enclave and that the courtiers she sustained relationships with offered the Duchess an avenue of interaction with the wider environment outside the court. Indeed, through the agency of her courtiers, Giovanna was able to initiate and maintain a second series of patronage relationships with the Florentine merchants and the convents involved in the textile industry.

Magdalene von Sprinzenstein appears on various occasions in the *Guardaroba* files. In 1569 she paid for a quantity of white German linen received from *Madama Betta rivenditora*, (a second-hand dealer), while in 1570 she was said to have taken charge of a consignment of various textiles from Salvo Taglioni, *veletaio*, (a veil seller or maker).⁷³ Magdalene also appears at various times authorising payments to a number of people on behalf of the Duchess. Some of these payments were of substantial amounts, such as the 161 *scudi* she paid for black satin and black damask to Francesco Amatori, or the 76 *scudi* paid to Zanobi da Filicaia for black velvet.⁷⁴ This indicates that she was a trusted component of the Duchess' court and also shows that she had frequent contacts with Florentines, such as the silk merchant Antonio Salviati, from whom she was reported to have received orange taffeta in 1570.⁷⁵ Such appears to have been the trust invested in her by Giovanna that Magdalene even seems to have bargained with the merchants and agreed the prices for their wares herself. An example of this can be found in the receipt in which Benedetto Machiavelli declares that he agreed the price of the damask and velvet sold to the Duchess with the 'sig.a mad.na princista'.⁷⁶ All this had considerable impact on the perception of Giovanna's role within the city and her

⁷³ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated to 1569, p. 336 and Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 429.

⁷⁴ Ibid., Fascicolo dated to 1568, p. 179r.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Fascicolo dated 1573, p. 458r.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 207.

deployment of her courtiers and engagement in consumption activities could significantly raise her profile amongst the merchants who could be persuaded to view her as a potential font of wealth as well as the Duke. Those biographers who have accused her of being an isolated figure may have thought so because, unlike her sisters, she did not rule when her husband was absent, nor, like Eleonora, was she involved in the administration of justice. She was not therefore involved in the official deployment of authority. Nevertheless, she did find an alternative means of operating through her consumption. Her courtiers served as her intermediaries and representatives both inside and outside the court and, as I will discuss in chapter six, she was able to distribute patronage and create an independent identity largely through their work.

On the two occasions when Magdalene is mentioned other than by name, she is called one of Giovanna's ladies; this happens only in the first two years, which indicates that she soon became a familiar figure at court and outside and needed no further introduction other than her name. Although Magdalene appears to have been an active member of Giovanna's court, as the lists of salaried members of the court show, the Duchess did not employ only her fellow countrymen. One of the people most often listed in the *Guardaroba* receipts is the Italian Giovanni Talenti, who appears in the records from 1568 and is described variously as her *creato*, her *aiutante di camera* and her *agente*, whose role appears to have been to collate the receipts present in these files, to pay Giovanna's debts to various courtiers, goldsmiths and textile merchants, to liaise with Magdalene and others of Giovanna's ladies, and to pay the salaries she owed to her courtiers, as well as to take receipt of the money due to Giovanna as her monthly allowance. Further Italians mentioned in these files are Maddalena de'Bardi, of Florentine extraction, a certain Margherita Filipepa or Filipetra de'Bertini, and the Countess da Bagno (who first appears in 1571). These women were also actively engaged in similar household tasks to those taken on by Magdalene, such as arranging for nuns at various monasteries to complete sewing work for Giovanna, paying various merchants on Giovanna's behalf, and intervening with the Duchess on behalf of nuns who were still awaiting payment.⁷⁷ Giovanna herself appears on at least one occasion to have visited merchants' premises: the merchant Giovan Maria Deti writes that she took

⁷⁷ Ibid., Fascicolo dated 1568, p. 139 and Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 377.

green twill and black *rascia*⁷⁸ from him in person on the 4th of August 1571.⁷⁹ Again, this proves that the Duchess enjoyed a high degree of independence in organising and controlling her expenditure, and that she chose not to remain isolated, even interacting personally with the inhabitants of the city outside the confines of the court. This also suggests that her Italian may have been better than has been believed up till now.⁸⁰ Much of Giovanna's expenditure appears to have been limited to clothing, as I will discuss further in chapter six. Her courtiers played a representative role, not only in acquiring the textiles, but also in wearing them. In this way too, they served and honoured Giovanna in return for her patronage. However, Giovanna was able to become a public figure at court in Florence not only through her purchase of textiles and the clothing of her followers, but also through her religious patronage and almsgiving.

Charity and Religious Patronage

As well as seeking to create successful relationships with the Florentine merchants, Giovanna also made concerted efforts to engage with the wider populace. One means of doing so was through charitable giving. This was a customary activity whereby the Medici Duchesses, although removed from any official role on the political scene, could still undertake the sort of displays of pious generosity that would reflect favourably on the Medici family and their position as leaders of the city. In this way Giovanna, like Medici women before her, was able to enter the public space of the city while still remaining within the framework of acceptable female activity by emphasising the moral, merciful aspects of her involvement.⁸¹

A document exemplifying this type of patronage, kept among Giovanna's accounts and receipts, contains three affidavits written on behalf of a poor family of cobblers who, presumably, the Duchess was having 'background-checked' before she agreed to help them.⁸² Elsewhere we have short entries which briefly detail sums of money given to various people in need: to free a woman from prison, to a woman who

⁷⁸ *Rascia* was a fine-grade woolen cloth without a nap, amongst the most expensive woolen cloths manufactured in Florence in the 1500s. Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 315.

⁷⁹ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1571, p. 454.

⁸⁰ There appears to be some controversy over this, as it has been claimed that she did not learn Italian. For example Emma Micheletti, *Le donne dei Medici* (Florence: Sansoni, 1983), p. 136 declared that she never learnt Italian properly, and never managed to write correctly. This is disproved by the archival sources. Ercole Cortile, wrote that she spoke Italian very well. See Appendix 3, letter dated 15 January 1575.

⁸¹ In doing so, Giovanna was following a line of action that had already been undertaken by many Medici wives, daughters, and mothers before her. Tomas, *The Medici Women*, pp. 45, 55-56.

⁸² ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 299.

had recently given birth, to two Germans, and to ‘several poor people’.⁸³ There is also an actual book of alms that has survived and lists in greater detail the requests that the Duchess received and chose to satisfy; amongst these, a number are by members or employees of the court, such as ‘Bartolomeo, spazzatore di palazzo’ (the palace sweep), but there are also many bequests made to those whose connection with the palace, if any, is unclear, such as the wife of a greengrocer (*ortolano*) or the widow Iacopa Talducci.⁸⁴ The latter was given 14 *lire* to marry, and this appears to have been a frequent phenomenon, with gifts of various amounts to women to wed either themselves or their daughters, or to enter convents. None of these alms were given in huge amounts, and the recipients were not people of status or power, but the activity of almsgiving was still a key method of patronage for Giovanna and a way of binding the populace to herself.

Although the almsgiving Giovanna undertook was relatively inexpensive and targeted people of minimal socio-economic importance, nevertheless it was a key component of her identity as Duchess of Florence, and was also a valuable way of becoming publicly recognised as a figure capable of direct and independent intervention. A story recounted by Mary Steegman in her biography of Bianca asserts that:

When a poor man asked help of the Archduchess (for all the common people adored her and were not afraid to appeal to her generosity), she answered bitterly, ‘Friend you have knocked at the wrong door; you must go to Bianca if you want help’.⁸⁵

Steegman makes no reference to any source for this story, but, whether anecdotal or not, it is still an important indication of both the importance of this activity to the image of the Duchess, highlighted by the fact that the story employs almsgiving to illustrate Bianca’s usurpation of Giovanna’s place, and also about the public nature of this activity and this particular Duchess’ availability to her people. In making herself approachable and going out into the city, Giovanna was breaking with the tradition of her predecessor, Eleonora de Toledo, whom contemporary chroniclers describe as worshipping privately in the palace.⁸⁶ There is evidence to support the idea that Giovanna went out into Florence and made herself publicly visible – the contemporary

⁸³ Ibid., Fascicolo dated 1571, p. 383.

⁸⁴ ASF, GM 66, p. 1v.

⁸⁵ Steegmann, *Bianca Cappello*, pp. 128-29.

⁸⁶ Alice Sanger, ‘Women of Power: Studies in the Patronage of Medici Grand Duchesses and Regentesses, 1565-1650’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 2000), p. 42.

chronicler Giuliano de' Ricci states that she made very frequent visits to the Church of the Annunziata in Florence⁸⁷ while the Jesuit archives reveal that the Duchess came to the Jesuit Church with her whole court on Maundy Thursday (the Thursday before Easter) in the first year of her stay in Florence, and in doing so had 'surprised the whole of Florence, gaining much renown'.⁸⁸ The Jesuits' letters also record that when Giovanna left the palace to go out into the city her generosity ensured that she always returned empty-handed.⁸⁹ We may see this public parading of her charitable activities as both an attempt to assert her status as Duchess of Florence and to circumvent some of the limitations on her independence. Giovanna, who lacked the independent income that allowed Eleonora de Toledo to engage in publicly significant projects such as the Pitti palace, was nonetheless able to build up her status and reputation through distributing these small financial gifts.

Such activity was also consonant with her Habsburg background. Gernot Heiss has argued that the Emperor's religious conduct and that of his family were essentially a part of public policy – exhibiting proper devotional behaviour was vital for the good of the state.⁹⁰ Giovanna could therefore use pious activity as a means of negotiating her identity as the Duchess of Florence, and do so in a forum to which her gender admitted her. Giovanna took a keen interest in the habits and well-being of the monastic orders in Florence and, in keeping with her religious upbringing, she was committed to supporting the Jesuits. The letters kept in the Jesuit archives describe the Duchess' visit to the order in Florence shortly after her arrival in the city. The account given describes her coming to the Jesuits' house without giving any prior warning of her intention, and the chronicler adds that when the heads of the house came to meet her, she insisted on greeting all of those who lived there with a handshake – 'according to the German tradition'. The Duke Francesco was unaware of this visit – passing by and informed of her presence, he stopped and went into the house, finding his wife in the larder interrogating her hosts on their expenses and income. She then turned to her husband and told him that the Jesuits were too poor and did not live in appropriate quarters. The author of this frank description goes on to remark that the Duke changed colour and seemed embarrassed. He ends by again commenting on Giovanna's insistence on

⁸⁷ 'per sua divotione andava continuamente...nella chiesa della Nunziata'. Ibid. and Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 184.

⁸⁸ 'sorpreso tutta Firenze, dove ha sparso di se gran nome'. Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, p. 218.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 351.

⁹⁰ Heiss, 'Princes, Jesuits and the Origins of the Counter-Reformation' (p. 100).

shaking hands with everyone before she left, and that she spoke in German to Father Elderen, saying that she would call the Jesuits to the Palace as soon as she was able.⁹¹ This vivid description gives a clear picture of Giovanna's independence of spirit, and her strong and open attachment to German ways of doing things. It is worth noting that she ended her visit following her native custom despite the presence of the Duke and chose to speak in her native tongue. Although it might be considered natural for the Duchess to behave according to the rules of her upbringing, given the fact that she had only recently arrived from Innsbruck, one must remember the pressure placed upon foreign brides to adapt immediately and unquestioningly to their new home's customs, especially in public. Given the importance of etiquette, the German handshake would have been – and clearly was – noted and understood as a signal of how Giovanna intended to position herself in Florence. Furthermore, the message, delivered in German, that Giovanna would receive the Jesuits in the palace, plainly without having first consulted her husband, who had not even been informed of her proposed visit to the Jesuits' house, is another indication that Giovanna intended to be seen as an independent operator. The Duchess' interest in creating networks of patronage that involved the Florentine religious communities and ascended as high as the Pope is clearly visible in her gift-giving activities, as I will discuss in chapter six.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the financial and organisational arrangements set in place for Giovanna's court, her responsibilities in relation to her courtiers and her charitable and patronage networks both in Florence and further afield. I have also emphasised the fluidity of the boundaries that separated her court from that of the Duke and her lack of a defined space of independent power. Because the successful management of the female court did not depend on well-established rules and laws but on financial situations and relationships which clearly changed according to the particularities of place, time and person, the consort could find herself facing ever-expanding difficulties when things went wrong. The problems that existed in the relationship between Giovanna and Francesco have already been highlighted by the gradual abandonment of a common policy with respect to the marriages arranged for the Duchess' ladies-in-waiting. During the course of the next chapter I trace the slow

⁹¹ Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, p. 217.

disintegration of the collaboration between Giovanna and Francesco de' Medici, the effects that this had on her authority, and the problems that could be created for the consort if a rival for the role of ducal intermediary gained power. As I have already indicated in my discussion of the Duchess' pursuit of highly-visible charitable activities, the problematic relationship between Giovanna and Francesco had key consequences for the Duchess's reliance on gift-giving and the choices she made in her consumption of material culture.

Chapter Five

Conflict and Control

Controlling the Female Court

In Florence, as in the other courts of central and northern Italy, by the late sixteenth century, the state was not differentiated from the ruling family. Justice was administered by the duke, and all governing bodies were appointed according to his wishes. For such a system to function successfully the duke had to be the undisputed head of his state and the head of his court, which was a version of the state in miniature; any rival figurehead would jeopardize the ruler's control and lead to the creation of factions and his potential ousting from power. In order to avoid such a scenario and to exercise this essential control, the duke had to bind his subjects to him, or at least those who had the potential power and backing to rebel against him. For this reason, under his guidance, the court became increasingly the only available gateway to prestige and wealth for those ambitious enough to seek it. An example of the way Francesco attempted to do this is reported in a letter of the Ferrarese ambassador, Ercole Cortile, in May 1575; in it he comments on the fact that Francesco has now ordered that all those who receive a stipend from him must reside at court and abandon their feudal castles.¹ This system forced the nobility to gravitate towards the court, and therefore to put themselves under the Duke's control, in order to protect their own interests and to ensure that the privileges, investitures, tax exemptions and grants continued to flow into their hands, rather than others whom the ruler might endorse in their absence.

Dependency in exchange for gifts and privileges is the key to understanding the complications innate in the construction and maintenance of the female court, and also

¹ ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 24, Fascicolo 11, letter dated 22 May 1575.

essential to understanding why other satellite courts, such as those of siblings and parents who had retired as heads of state but who were still alive, were not so potentially problematic. The duchess was the one figure who could put this whole system out of joint. She had the potential to bring courtiers with her upon her marriage whose alliances circumvented the duke to link back directly to their native land, and to a powerful figure who was not always on good terms with his son-in-law and did not necessarily have the best interests of the dynasty in mind. Furthermore, as the duchess also ran her own court, financed to a certain extent independently according to the terms of her marriage contract, this instituted a separate court within the wider court which had the potential to create divided loyalties and again to divert control from the duke. For these reasons, the duke attempted to ensure that the members of the duchess' court did not depend exclusively on her for privileges and maintenance. In Florence's case the Medici Duke may have been particularly anxious about keeping control because of the city's relatively recent Republican past.

It is important to remember that some degree of reliance on the duke's decision making was expected in almost all of the duchess' activities. Courtiers within the female court would have been fully aware of the power the duke wielded and that he had the final say in most matters. The female court could co-exist in a stable and measured way with this state of affairs and in many situations did so; however, in Giovanna's case the balance of power was severely hampered by the combination of a number of factors. First of all, Habsburg lack of funds entailed that Giovanna's dowry was never paid and she was not endowed with any independent means of financing herself or her court. Secondly, she was for many years unable to provide the essential male heir to the duchy. Thirdly, she was active in Habsburg interests even when these went against those of her new family. Fourth, she was forced to compete for the Duke's attention and for the role of key intercessory agent with the Duke's mistress, Bianca Cappello, and finally, she was not supported by her family, who, hamstrung by their need for Medici money to finance their campaigns against the Turks, were unable to intervene effectively with the Duke to ensure that she was looked after.

Habsburg Loyalties

One of the major reasons for the duke's interest in controlling and supervising his consort's court stemmed from the fact that she was a foreigner and as such her immediate loyalties might not be towards her new family. I have indicated the ways in

which Eleonora sought to alleviate Guglielmo's suspicions by aligning herself firmly in his camp. In Giovanna's case, it is clear from the evidence left behind in the archives that she did not conform to Medici desires but played a significant role in safeguarding the interests of her family and country of origin. So we find a letter from the Emperor sent to her by one of his officials, Luca Römer, in May 1567, which requests her intervention with the Duke Cosimo, her father-in-law, to gain his aid in quelling a revolt in Finale. Römer openly urges her as follows:

Your Highness must be our agent at the side of His Excellency [Cosimo] in the service of His Caesarean Majesty [the Emperor].²

Elsewhere she intervened to protect German citizens in general, as in the letter she wrote to Cosimo to intercede for her in Rome to make sure that the German students currently residing in Siena might be protected from accusations of heresy. She justified her intervention by saying that: 'the German nation has no-one to turn to, if not to me'.³ This is a somewhat grandiose statement, that perhaps hints at Giovanna's sense of self-importance, but most importantly it tells us about how she saw herself and her role in Florence, and vitally, about the choices she was making in terms of her alliances – she was a Habsburg as well as a Medici, and as the letter from Römer urges her to, she was willing to support their interests over those of her new family. An example of the problems that could ensue from such interventions on behalf of her natal family is the furore that resulted from the marriage between Cosimo de' Medici and Camilla Martelli. Giovanna received a furious letter from the Emperor instructing her to convey his displeasure to Cosimo at his marriage to someone of comparatively obscure extraction. Cosimo responded with anger and a stark warning to her to curtail her interference.⁴

² ASF, AMP 5926, p. 82: 'Vostra Altezza sia nostra faultrice appresso Sua Eccellenza [Cosimo] per servitio delle cose di Sua Maestà Cesarea'. Finale was a margravate in Liguria, and an imperial fiefdom, governed by Alfonso del Carretto. After the 1566 uprising that saw his downfall, Carretto obtained refuge at the court of Maximilian II in Vienna, who found himself struggling to restore the margrave to his post against the claims of the rebels, and eventually against the troops of his brother-in-law Philip II of Spain as well. For further information see Friedrich Edelmayer, *Maximilian II, Philipp II und Reichsitalien: die Auseinandersetzungen um das Reichslehen Finale in Ligurien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1988).

³ ASF, MdP 5926, p. 85. 'Non havendo la natione Todesca a chi ricorrere, se non a me'. A letter written to Cosimo a few days later reconfirms Giovanna's ideas about her role in Italy: 'Ben so io, che se stesse in mano di Vostra Altezza il compiacere la natione Todesca di quel che cercano per mezzo mio, che ella per farmi favore, non ne mancherà...' ASF, MdP 5926, p. 86.

⁴ Guglielmo Enrico Saltini, *Tragedie medicee domestiche, 1557-87. Narrate sui documenti ... Premessavi una introduzione sul governo di Cosimo I* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1898), pp. 251-52.

Conflict in the Family

The first years of Giovanna's life in Florence are chronicled fairly extensively by the Ferrarese ambassador: Rodolfo Conegrani. He resided in Florence from the time of Giovanna's arrival up to the end of 1574 and provides a valuable source of information on the daily life of the court. From reading his letters as well as those that were exchanged between Giovanna and her correspondents, it is possible to gain a modicum of insight on what the relationship between the spouses was like over this period of time. As I have already discussed, the descriptions of the weddings that were arranged in the early years of the marriage indicate that the Duke and Duchess were maintaining a fairly amicable relationship; there are indications that she regularly ate with Francesco: 'She has started to eat at table with the Prince, but has not yet gone outside the palace since the birth...' ⁵ and travelled around with him, whether to their country houses, such as Poggio, where Conegrani writes that they stayed at the end of July 1570, to escape the heat of the city, ⁶ or through the duchy – they took a tour at the end of the summer of 1570. ⁷ Another letter written in November 1571 indicates that they were still spending time together – Conegrani reports that they were both in Cerreto to go hunting for a few days. ⁸ However, an exchange of letters dated to early in 1572 indicates that by this point the relationship had become troubled. Evidence of the couple's disagreements is provided by a series of letters exchanged between Giovanna and her father-in-law Cosimo. Only three letters have survived, but more were clearly written and it is possible to deduce that Giovanna and Francesco were fighting and Cosimo was trying to mediate. The first of the three is from Cosimo to Giovanna and I provide the full text below:

Most Serene Lady, every displeasure of Your Highness greatly upsets me, as I love you as my own daughter and I honour and revere you as my Lady, however your letter has given me no little displeasure, especially as there is no reason, as similar things often occur between those that most love each other, to take too much account of them. Your Highness shouldn't believe everything that is said to you, as in courts there is no lack of people who delight in sowing scandals. I know that the Prince loves you, as Your Highness equally

⁵ 'ha dato principio a mangiare a tavola con il signor Principe ma non è per ancor uscita fuori del palazzo do poi il parto...'. Conegrani's words suggest that when she was out of childbed, she ate regularly with Francesco. ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 22, Fascicolo 5, letter dated 12 April 1567.

⁶ Ibid. 22, Fascicolo 8, letter dated 22 July 1570.

⁷ Ibid. 22, Fascicolo 9, letter dated 12 August 1570.

⁸ Ibid. 23, Fascicolo 2, letter dated 11 November 1571.

loves him, but it is necessary to behave oneself in each other's regard in some things and to allow youth its course and to bear with wisdom what then is swiftly over, otherwise a disdain and hatred would slowly arise that could never be put out. I do not think that the Prince lets Your Highness lack for anything, he is always in your company and he will always agree to whatever you ask for your person and your household, and if Your Highness looks at your sisters perhaps you will be happier than you make out about your situation, as I know how some of them and more than one have been treated. Let Your Highness not be capricious but exercise prudence and loving kindness, showing yourself ever more cheerful towards the Prince and I will let him know my thoughts on the matter, and let you take care of the household and leave the cares of government to him and so Your Highness will certainly have a better life with greater tranquillity and comfort, and I will never be found wanting in what I owe for your happiness, and you can count on me as a father and as your most loving servant, and I kiss Your Highness' hands, praying God for all contentment and happiness. From Pisa the 22 January 1571 [1572 in the modern calendar].

Your Highness' faithful servant,

The Grand Duke of Tuscany.⁹

There is then another letter from Giovanna to Cosimo, dated to the 26th of January 1572 as follows:

⁹ 'Serenissima Signora, hogni disgusto di Vostra Altezza mi travaglia grandemente perchè la amo come propria figliuola e la osservo e riverisco come mia Signora, pero la sua lettera mia dato non piccolo dispiacere, massime che non può esserci cagione che di simili non ne nasca spesso in fra quelli che più si amano da tenerne troppo conto. Non bisogna creder tutto quello che venga detto a Vostra Altezza, conciosia che nelle corti non manchi chi si diletta di seminare scandali. Io so che il principe la vuole tutto il suo bene, e Vostra Altezza lui parimente, ma è necessario comportarsi luno laltro in qualche cosa, e alleta giovanile conceder il suo corso e soportare con prudentia quel che il poi corre poi in breve, altrimenti si accendonbbe a poco a poco un sdegno et odio da nonlo spegnare mai. Non credo che il principe lasci mancar a Vostra Altezza cosa alcuna, li tien continua compagnia e la contenterà sempre di quanto quello sapra domandar per la sua persona e di sua famiglia, che se Vostra Altezza guarda alle altre sue sorelle forse si contenteria più di quel che mostra dello stato in che si trova, sapendo io come alcune di loro e più d'uno sono state trattate. Non si lasci Vostra Altezza metter ghiribizzi in testa ma eserciti la sua prudentia e amorevolezza, mostrandosi ogni or più allegra verso il principe che ancor lui diro lo animo mio, e si ingronbri nella cura della casa, lasciandole le brighe del governo a lui, che certo Vostra Altezza passerà miglior vita e con maggior quiete e consolatione et io non mancherò mai di quanto debbo per ogni contentezza di quella, potendosi prometter di nu' come di padre e servitor suo amorevolissimo, alla quale baciando le mani di Vostra Altezza li prego a dio ogni maggior contento e felicità. Di Pisa li 22 di gennaio 1571.

Di Vostra Altezza affectionato servitor,
Il gran Duca di Toscana'. ASF, MdP 639, p. 336.

Most Serene Lord my most honourable father, I have seen Your Highness' work and through your favour the Prince my Lord has forgiven me, even though I know well that I have done nothing wrong. Having made peace together, let God always keep his hand upon us that we may live together united and happy. I beg Your Highness anyway to make sure that none of those who have been the cause of this may be able to do such a thing ever again. I thought it would be a good idea to let Your Highness know what has passed between us and how it has reached the end that I desired, with which I kiss your hand, praying that you always keep me in your good graces. May God give you happiness. From Florence 26 January 1561 [sic. The date is actually 1572]. Your Highness' most obedient daughter, Giovanna Princess of Tuscany.¹⁰

A last letter from Cosimo confirms that he has received her news and expresses his pleasure at her renewed cordiality with the Prince.¹¹ Cosimo's words about ignoring palace gossip hint at Bianca's presence as a source of conflict. However, a more direct mention of Francesco's extramarital affair is contained in a letter by the Ferrarese ambassador:

Sir Mario Sforza has returned here; he had left all of a sudden in the past days and it was said that it was because the Prince was angry with him and with his wife because she had told Her Highness that the Prince was making love with the Venetian Lady Bianca Cappello, but it could be that it was for some other reason which is not known, but His Excellency sees him regularly, as he did before, and I think that he will remain even though his consort hasn't returned, and she always used to come with him....¹²

Saltini states that the motive for this conflict was without doubt the Duchess' discovery of her husband's liaison, however, I would argue that although Bianca was almost certainly one of the issues in Giovanna's struggle with Francesco in 1572, it is unlikely

¹⁰ 'Serenissimo signoro mio patre osservandissimo.

Molta bene io mi son avisto del opere del vostra Altezza et del favor sua et causato che il principe mi signoro mi a pertonata, ancor che so non aver fatto eror nesuno. Avento fatto pace insieme, dio mantenga sempre la sua mana sopra di nui che posiamo vivere insieme unita et contenta. Perga vostra Altezza in angni moto volgio fare con sua autorita che nesun di quelli che sun stato causa non ci risigana piu far simil cosa. Noi pareva fuse bene fare sapere vostra Altezza quanto stato fra' nui et come auto quel fino qual io disideravo, con quel fino vi bacio la mane, pregantolo sempre mi dengo in la sua bona gratia. Che dio li dia felicità contonta. Di fiorenza di 26 ienaio 1571.

Di vostra Altezza

ovitiendisima filgiola,

giovanna principesa di toscana'. ASF, MM 16, Fascicolo 21, unpaginated.

¹¹ ASF, MdP 639, p. 312.

¹² See Appendix 3, letter dated 1 March 1572.

that she did not know or strongly suspect the liaison before this date.¹³ Furthermore, Giovanna's words: 'nesun di quelli che sun stato causa', together with Cosimo's emphasis on Giovanna's not involving herself in issues of government: 'take care of the home, leaving the worries of government to him', indicate a possible plurality of issues that were affecting the relationship. His words indicate that Giovanna may have been seen as interfering in areas that were considered off-limits, and not only doing so but acting disloyally to the Medici and operating on behalf of her native family. This hypothesis is supported by a letter dated to December 1573 in which Francesco shows his anger at her actions in a scrawled handwritten note made at the bottom of a letter from Giovanna, in which she asks for a further loan. The Duke replied:

Whoever gives 3,000 *scudi* at a time to Prayner [Baron Preiner], who Her Highness knows is an enemy of her house, can easily sort out paying her own debts, it being no surprise that she has them throwing money away like this...¹⁴

Baron Preiner had already cropped up as an issue at court when the Duchess wrote to the Florentine secretary Bartolomeo Concini, to inform him of an unofficial visit of the Emperor's trusted agent, the Baron Siegfried Preiner, to Florence, where he wished to see her and give her a letter from the Emperor, but did not yet want to speak to her husband.¹⁵ Francesco's accusation provides further evidence that Giovanna may not have been operating as a satisfactory Medici Duchess.

However, despite these other issues, the most important problem Giovanna faced, especially during the later years of her residence in Florence, was without doubt the alternative source of feminine patronage evinced in the powerful figure of Bianca Cappello, Francesco's mistress and later wife. Bianca's permanence on the scene in Florence, and the fact that she had the ear of the duke meant that Giovanna was confronted with an extremely powerful rival for the role of ducal intermediary. Such was Bianca's established presence in the Medici family that she even sought to

¹³ I would argue that Giovanna may have chosen to ignore the truth of what was happening in the hope that it might disappear, but was forced to confront it by the revelations, if it so happened, of Sforza's wife. Saltini, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 125.

¹⁴ 'chi dona 3/m ▼ di per volta al Prayner, che sa Sua Altezza esser linimico di casa sua, puo pensar facilmente à pagar' li suoi debiti, non sendo meraviglia che si faccino buttando via li denari a questo modo...'. ASF, MdP 6355/A, p. 63.

¹⁵ Leuzzi, 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze' (pp. 246-47); ASF, MdP 5926, p. 139. This indicates Giovanna's ongoing communication with her native family and their employment of her position embedded at the Florentine court.

intercede with Francesco's brother, the Cardinal Ferdinando, who disapproved of her presence in Florence.¹⁶

Conflict and its Impact on the Female Court

While the sources cited above indicate that by 1572 the relationship between Giovanna and Francesco was volatile, it is only with the arrival of the second Ferrarese ambassador, Ercole Cortile, in 1575, that the situation really appeared to have disintegrated. A detailed chronicle of Giovanna's struggle with Francesco and the deterioration of her position at court is provided by the afore-mentioned Cortile and the letters are listed in the Appendix to this thesis.

The relationship between Ferrara and Florence was strained, due to the question of precedence discussed in chapter one. As a result there is no doubt that Cortile wished to paint as much of a negative picture of the situation in Florence as possible, just as Francesco's ambassador in Ferrara, Bernardo Canigiani, lost no opportunity to inform his master of any embarrassment or problem occurring at the Ferrarese court. However, although Cortile might be accused on occasion of exaggerating the embarrassment caused by Francesco's philandering with Bianca, and Bianca's supposedly all-encompassing power at court, there is no reason to think that the substance of his letters did not reflect the reality of Florentine life at court and the relationships between those who resided there. After all, he would have been actively harming his duke and compromising his position as diplomatic correspondent if he misinformed him regarding the situation. We can therefore take his letters as a broadly accurate portrayal of the relationships between Bianca, Francesco and Giovanna, and the effects on Giovanna's authority and independence as head of her court.

Ercole Cortile was ambassador in Florence in the years between 1575 and 1577. During his correspondence for these years he describes a situation in which Francesco's mistress, Bianca Cappello, was receiving the attention and loyalty which was actively prevented from reaching the Duke's wife, Giovanna. The ambassador repeatedly wrote that all of Florence now went to Bianca for help and to gain positions and prestige.¹⁷ This was the role that Giovanna had been undertaking and was supposed to undertake

¹⁶ ASF, MdP 5947/C, p. 52, Baldassare Zamboni's *Vita di Bianca Cappello*.

¹⁷ 'Things have come to such a pass in this city that whoever wishes for grace or justice must go via Bianca'. See Appendix 3, letter dated 2 July 1575. 'It is essential in this city to be favoured by Bianca'. Ibid., letter dated 7 December 1575. 'Here...one must go through Bianca for everything'. Ibid., letter dated 28 April 1576.

and its removal and the Duke's lack of interest in her meant that her powers to run her court and ensure the loyalty of her courtiers were severely curtailed. If the relationship between the two camps was troubled, those courtiers in the female court would not necessarily support the Duchess as they depended on ducal approval for their continued presence at court. This dereliction of duty towards Giovanna on the part of the court and the Duke was made manifest on various occasions from the early 1570s onwards. Her identity as Duchess of Florence was systematically undermined by the usurpation of what it meant to be Duchess in all its facets. For example, Cortile noted that the Duchess was not given the social attention due to someone in her position within the court hierarchy: he pointedly remarked that while the Duchess put on a number of comedies to celebrate the carnival of 1575, the Duke did not attend any of them, being occupied in other pleasures, i.e. with Bianca.¹⁸ In another report dated a year later, he described the intimacy sought by the Duke's sister and sister-in-law, Eleonora and Isabella with Bianca:

This man [Francesco] continues in his love for Bianca, who has become so mighty that Lady Eleonora and Lady Isabella go to visit her at home and take her around in their carriages. And when they want some favour or grace, they use her as their intermediary, and Her Highness [Giovanna] is very melancholy, seeing that she is little appreciated by these Princesses too...¹⁹

This clearly indicates that not only was Giovanna's social role being relegated, but one of her main functions as Duchess – her position as intermediary with the Duke – was being usurped by Bianca, and Giovanna's ability to require loyalty from her courtiers was subsequently profoundly undermined. This increasing lack of allegiance is revealed in another of Cortile's letters dating to May 1576 where he described the Count of Santafiora, the very man who had originally been in charge of negotiating Giovanna's marriage to Francesco back in 1565, encouraging his wife to attach herself to Bianca, instead of Giovanna:

Sir Mario Santafiore...has become Bianca's servant and he and his wife court her as though she were their mistress... the Duchess is more melancholy than ever....many times she

¹⁸ Ibid., letter dated 29 January 1575.

¹⁹ Ibid., letter dated 4th February 1576.

comes across Bianca...on foot with the wife of Sir Mario, almost as though she were her housemaid[?].²⁰

The evidence that survives in the Florentine archive demonstrates that the Duchess remained active, attempting to arrange marriages, operating with or on behalf of her relatives north of the Alps and with her sister Eleonora, engaging with religious houses, and still interceding for those who asked her, but the ambassador's reports show that her status as Duchess was gradually eroding. Cortile highlighted this fact when he pointed out that Bianca entertained the Venetian ambassador: the subtext was that this should rightfully have been the Duchess' role, but Bianca is now Duchess, it appears, in all but name.²¹

A letter from October 1575 further illustrated the receding of Giovanna's position when it recounted that while Bianca travelled about accompanied by a large retinue of gentlemen, Giovanna was forced to make do with only a few;²² this was because Francesco had chosen to severely limit the number of her personnel, as is discussed in a later letter where Cortile commented that the duke had ruled that only a certain few gentlemen could accompany the Duchess, and those had to be selected by him.²³ We now see that the control that Francesco had only mildly asserted at the beginning of Giovanna's life in Florence, exemplified in his assertion that she had enough ladies in waiting and so could not take on the one put forward by Eleonora,²⁴ is now aggressive and threatening. Not only did Francesco limit the people Giovanna was allowed to have, he also actively got rid of those already amongst her retinue whom he did not like, and this is commented on with great disapproval by the ambassador:

²⁰ Ibid., letter dated 13 May 1576.

²¹ 'The Lady Bianca put on that comedy which she had performed this Carnival to entertain him [the Venetian ambassador], and today she has arranged a banquet for him which they say is beautiful and extremely expensive'. Ibid., letter dated 25 March 1576.

²² 'When His Highness and the said Bianca go out into the countryside, she seems to be the Duchess, because she goes in one of His Excellency's carriages with four horses and accompanied by many gentlemen, and the Duchess goes alone, accompanied by Count Polidoro da Castello'. Ibid., letter dated 31 October 1575. Another example of the importance of her lack of retinue in signalling that she is not fulfilling her rightful role comes in another letter dating to a year later: 'The Lady Duchess is more melancholy than ever, since she goes out accompanied by two or three gentlemen and she often encounters Bianca accompanied by ten or fifteen by the side of her carriage'. Ibid., letter dated 13 May 1576.

²³ 'They have forbidden any but a few gentlemen specially selected by His Excellency [Francesco] from visiting the said Lady [Giovanna]'. Ibid., letter dated 31 December 1575.

²⁴ See chapter four, note 14.

His Excellency the Duke sent away the other day at three in the morning, one of the German women who came with the Duchess, and they say that she [the Duchess] is greatly displeased.²⁵

Again in February 1576, Cortile noted that a young Jewish girl who lived in the palace and was a favourite of the Duchess was banished to a monastery because she had been caught trying to smuggle out a letter from Giovanna to the Emperor.²⁶ The contents of Cortile's letters reveal that Giovanna's status as head of her own court was so compromised by 1576 that she could no longer have any trust in those courtiers she had around her. He claimed that her courtiers, and the Countess Bianca Rangone da Bagno is picked out as a particular culprit, far from being her servants, had now become her keepers, spying on her and ready to intercept any letters which she might attempt to smuggle out.²⁷ Although the Countess may have been required to operate as a spy, we cannot be sure as to the extent of her actual desire to fulfil this role. Her situation demonstrates the problem courtiers could face when the male ruler decided to intervene in his wife's supposedly independent court. In her case, further problems may have arisen from the fact that her husband, Gian Francesco, was one of the Duke's gentlemen. It appears that when the Countess was taken on as one of Giovanna's ladies (she appears in Giovanna's accounts as *maiordoma* in the years 1571-72), Giovanna proclaimed herself very fond of her and intervened with her brother-in-law, the Duke of Mantua to help her son:

Your Excellency will see what the Countess of Bagno is asking for on behalf of her son, a thing which seems to me to be so just that I cannot refrain from recommending what they want to Your Excellency, and beg you to grant their wish for love of me, since it would do them too great harm if they let their possession go to ruin, as would certainly happen very quickly if they were not allowed to drain off the water. She is so dear to me that I want this almost as though it were for myself.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., letter dated 19 December 1575.

²⁶ 'They have put a Jewish woman who lived in the palace and was much favoured by Her Highness in the Monastery of San Clemente with a great uproar, and the reason is because the said young woman gave a letter from Her Highness to someone who was to send it on, they think to the Emperor, but he tricked her and handed it over to the Duke'. Ibid., letter dated 18 February 1576.

²⁷ 'His Excellency having ordered the Countess of Bagno to always be present at whatever she [Giovanna] is doing and whenever she speaks'. Ibid., letter dated 29 July 1576.

²⁸ 'Vederà Vostra Eccellenza quello che le vien' supplicato dalla Contessa di Bagno a nome del figliuolo, il che mi par' cosa tanto giusta che non posso lassare di non raccomandare questo loro desiderio all' Eccellenza Vostra et pregarla che per amor' mio si contenti di esaudirli, poi che sarebbe loro di troppo gran' danno selassassino andare in Rovina quella possessione, come certo farebbe in breve se non le fusse

Later in 1576 another letter, this time from Cortile, seems to confirm that a more complex relationship between the Duchess and the Countess existed than straightforward enmity. The Countess is this time described as intervening on behalf of the Duchess:

Every evening when he returns home he yells at the poor lady, saying that she is a weak woman and useless and even that she is a beast, and when she wished to answer back one evening, he wanted to hit her, and the Countess da Bagno intervened saying 'watch what you do sire', and he replied 'silence whore'.²⁹

Cortile asserts that much of his knowledge comes from a certain Eleonora Cibo, Marquise of Cetona, who resided as a widow in the Convent of the Murate, and appears to have been a friend of Giovanna's, often functioning as an intermediary between the Duchess and the Ambassador.³⁰ The account sounds sensational in the extreme, and may well have been exaggerated to paint Francesco in the worst light possible. If true, however, it provides a clear example of a scenario where the Duke's desire to intervene in the female court as the stronger power-holder could shatter traditional courtly relationships and create a situation where courtiers were forced to choose between conflicting demands for loyalty. It may also explain why some of those courtiers who still remained within the Duchess' court were actively seeking another patron.

Cortile's ongoing interest in Giovanna and her plight is partly due to the fact that Alfonso d'Este had agreed that he would convey Giovanna's letters to the Emperor for her, if she were able to pass them over to Cortile to send to him. Alfonso's reasons for doing this are clearly tied to his desire to have the contest over precedence settled in his favour. Cortile constantly commented on how outrageous it was that the Duke should treat his wife so and still be favoured by the Emperor, her brother, and how, if the Emperor were to know of Giovanna's treatment he would soon change his mind about favouring Francesco.³¹ His realpolitik opinion is fully revealed in a letter dated to July 1576, in which he argued that:

concesso lo scolo di quell'acque. Ella m'è così accetta che desidero questa gratia come se fusse per me propria...'. ASM, AG 1087, Fascicolo 5, p. 372.

²⁹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 18 February 1576.

³⁰ The Marquise is the recipient of a boar from Giovanna. See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 2 November 1577.

³¹ 'Now see Your Highness [the tone is ironic] how right the Emperor is to bestow such favours on this man who treats his things [referring to Giovanna] so badly'. See Appendix 3, letter dated 18 February 1576. And 'When the emperor and his relatives hear about the ill treatment inflicted on this Lady...maybe they will deal differently with this man [Francesco]'. Ibid., letter dated 4 August 1576.

I believe that our Lord God has given this opportunity to Your Highness to show the Emperor and his entire House, how much Your Highness loves and respects him.³²

He then urged Alfonso to send him further instructions as soon as possible. Giovanna herself was motivated to turn to Alfonso, because her system of influence and patronage within the court had broken down. No longer able to trust some of her courtiers, and hampered in her efforts to use those whom she could trust due to ducal interference, she turned to those outside ducal control, such as the Duke of Ferrara, who could intervene on her behalf, and whom she hoped to be able to recompense by interceding with the Emperor in his favour. Evidence of her turning to family rather than Florentine networks and her Habsburg identity can already be found from 1573 onwards, with the Sprinzenstein wedding, her pilgrimage to Loreto which I will discuss in chapter seven, and in Francesco's note regarding her gift of money to Baron Preiner. Giovanna's refusal to assume an entirely Medicean identity and offer her full support to her new families' policies, coupled with the absence of Cosimo's restraining influence after the latter's death in 1574 no doubt had a great effect on pushing Francesco to take the harsh measures against her chronicled by Cortile. The ambassador detailed various meetings he had with Giovanna, some of which were hindered by the presence of her courtier-spies³³ and eventually he was able to take a letter from her to Alfonso. Unfortunately for Giovanna, however, even when she was finally able to reveal to her natal family the trials she was enduring at the hands of her husband, this did her little good. The alliance with the wealthy Medici was too useful to the debt-ridden Imperial family to allow any severing of relations, and Francesco was fully aware of the fact. Indeed, in a letter from Cortile he is quoted as responding to her threat to tell her family of his treatment of her by saying: 'her relatives need him far more than he needs them'.³⁴ Her brother Ferdinand, Archduke of Tyrol remonstrated with Francesco furiously, but he could provide no real succour.³⁵

³² Ibid., letter dated 29 July 1576.

³³ 'I started then to deliver Your Highness'[Duke Alfonso's] message, but the Count Polidoro came up and stood behind my chair, so that I had to change the subject, to my great displeasure, and I think to the displeasure of Her Highness [Giovanna] as well...'. Ibid., letter dated 1 September 1576.

³⁴ Ibid., letter dated 12 September 1576.

³⁵ Ferdinand even threatened to invade the Duchy to retrieve his sister, but backed down and said that it would have to be left in God's hands following the complaints to the Emperor by Francesco. ASF, Carte Stroziane 359, p. 118.

Conclusion

The evidence provided by the Habsburg Archduchesses has demonstrated that the situation of the female consort might vary broadly. However it is possible to draw some common conclusions regarding her position, and first and foremost, to say that her court was not as autonomous an entity as previously thought. Rather than a mere copy of the male court, it appears to depend upon far more fluid and shifting arrangements based on relationships, alliances and ongoing negotiation, and agreements over payments, provisions, appointments, and patronage activities could vary from one generation to the next, and indeed over the course of one life-span. All three Duchesses participated in certain activities: arranging marriages for their ladies, providing their dowries, and operating on behalf of their courtiers and others who requested their intercession. However, outside these areas, the character and activities of each court depended on a series of individual circumstances, including the political situation within the duchy, the Duchess' background, her financial situation, her temperament, her relationship with her husband and the relationship between her natal family and her new family.

Each Duchess furthermore faced strong pressure to conform and assimilate. The reason for this lies in the fact that she was an unknown – a foreigner, she brought strange and uncontrolled elements with her, and she came under arrangements dictated according to the terms of differing contracts. She might come from a family that was an ally, but this could change into an enemy – she could always reveal herself as a threat. This might not be a problem if she came as a private citizen, without an official role, but in reality, while she might be barred from holding administrative roles, she still came as a counterpart to the ruler. As such all these elements could interfere in the delicate balance that existed in every court between the ruler and the courtier. Each court was intended to operate with one head alone, and the binary dialogue of patronage and service that bound courtier to ruler could be distorted and even broken through third-person intervention. This was as much a reality for the male court as for the female, and the ducal intervention that we have seen taking place, either harshly or in a more advisory manner, can be understood as partly a preventative measure to ensure his continued dominance in his own court through the subordination of his partner's and the restriction of their access to independent patronage activities, such as almsgiving.

All Duchesses had a choice, however, in how to approach the unease felt towards the female court, arising from the dichotomy between the role of a duchess as

subordinate wife merged into her husband's family, and her role as head of the court, pseudo *pater-familias* and representative of a foreign dynasty. In Eleonora and Barbara's case, the two Duchesses appear to have adopted a conciliatory and subordinate attitude towards their husbands, seeking their advice³⁶ and allying themselves with their consorts in their relationships with the Emperor. Giovanna, however, appears to have always been more uncertain in this role, and to have progressively abandoned it, admittedly in the face of great provocation, in favour of adopting a confrontational attitude with her husband and his family, for example through her public boycott of the marriage between her father-in-law and Camilla Martelli. Her refusal to accept the status quo and to ally herself incontrovertibly to the Medici resulted in Francesco's increasing conflict with her and his intervention in her court, until the relationship between Duchess and courtier was fatally harmed, and she was no longer seen as a reliable patron, as she no longer had the essential support of the Duke. This course of action had been advised against by Eleonora: there is a letter from her in which she urges Giovanna to behave like a wise princess and look to God for comfort from her tribulations, as otherwise next time her fight with Francesco might not end so well.³⁷ The intimation is clearly that Giovanna should hold her tongue for fear of worse.

The variety of circumstances that could affect the female consort and the choices she made came together to determine the areas in which she might operate and the strategies she could deploy to extend patronage and create the networks of contacts that were an essential means of strengthening and maintaining her position. While Eleonora and Barbara maintained predominantly harmonious relationships with their husbands,

³⁶ Alfonso's letter regarding the Wolckenstein girl was in response to a letter from Barbara, and he also mentions that he has spoken to her several times before on the subject of her authority: ASMo, ASE, Sezione Casa e Stato 83, letter dated 21 October 1566 (unpaginated): '[the lady in waiting Wolckenstein]...non saprebbe mai come partirsi contro i comandamenti suoi, del che mi ricordo haver anche ragionato altre volte con l'Altezza Vostra...' (she would never know how to leave against your orders, regarding which I remember having already spoken several times with Your Highness). See chapter three, note 7.

³⁷ ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, p. 97 (letter dated 8 February 1575 [1576 in modern dating]). 'prego Vostra Eccellenza di cuore si voglia guardare da qui avanti a non ritornar' di nuovo al medesimo, perche i tempi et l'occasioni son varij, et potria poi un'altra volta non finir' cosi bene. Però prego un'altra volta la Eccellenza Vostra come mia carissima sorella si voglia governare et regger' se stessa come una savia Principessa et haver' tutta la sua fidanza in Dio...onde ella vedrà quanto conforto et consolatione la sia per ricevere nelle sue tribolationj.' (I beg Your Highness with all my heart to make sure you do not go back to the same [argument], because times and occasions change, and another time it might not end so well. But I beg Your Highness again, as my dearest sister, to govern and control yourself as a wise princess, and to put all your trust in God...whence you will see how much comfort and consolation you will receive in your tribulations.).

Giovanna's conflict with Francesco, together with her lack of a public political role, because of the nature of the Florentine political situation, increased her need to employ material culture as a way of fostering loyalty and expressing her political views. In the next section, I will discuss in further detail the Duchesses' participation in consumption and gift-giving, two areas of activity that were available, albeit to varying degrees, to all consorts, and in which they could operate independently rather than as intermediaries or in association with male advisers.

SECTION TWO

**GIFT-GIVING AND
CONSUMPTION**

Introduction

What is there that gifts cannot do?¹

Leon Battista Alberti, in his *Libri della Famiglia*, argued that gifts ‘can win you new friends...’.² These words acquire particular significance for a consort who was a newcomer in a foreign court. While she was able to bring a certain number of courtiers from her own country, she faced a situation where she also had to forge successful relationships with the members of her new court, with her new family, and with key figures in her new environment. Gifts were one way for the consort to create networks and for others to introduce themselves into her circle and secure her friendship and patronage. They were also essential as a means of maintaining relationships with her native family and those she had left upon her marriage. Gifts both created relationships and marked them, making ties visible to friends and enemies alike.

The documentation examined in section one demonstrated the extent to which a consort might be financially dependent upon her husband and analysed the different areas in which she might face constraints on her ability to foster independent patronage or take on a public role. She might not be able to avoid her husband’s involvement in her court, the imposition of his choices in terms of her courtiers and their salaries. She might also lack a physically independent space and independent sources of revenue. But institutional, abstract networks and positions were only one side of the situation. This section will discuss the opportunities material culture could offer the Duchesses for working within this framework while still succeeding in accessing influence and creating and sustaining networks from which they were otherwise barred or faced outside intervention. I will also address the opportunities they had to employ goods to subvert traditional gender roles and make public political statements. One available avenue, as I have suggested, was that of gift-giving: gifts could provide a way of binding her courtiers and others, both influential members of society and the wider populace to her, of establishing networks of relationships outside her husband’s control, and of participating in politics. However, the female consort could also face limitations on the types of gifts she could and was expected to give, on the range of suitable

¹ Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, book 4, in Leon Battista Alberti and Renée Neu Watkins, *The Family in Renaissance Florence* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), p. 270.

² Ibid.

recipients, and again she could find herself in competition with her husband. In the following chapters I will discuss both the recipients of the Duchesses' gifts and the choices they made in their selection and consumption of particular material goods. I argue that the female consort could exploit the choices she made in terms of where, how and what she purchased, and how she employed the goods she had acquired, as a means of obtaining a voice, albeit visual rather than vocal, which was not mediated or controlled by her husband.

Chapter Six

Clothing, Patronage and Gift-Giving Networks

Introduction

Material culture has come under increasing scrutiny within the discipline of history. There has been a particular focus on the use of material culture within gender history, as women were active participants in the exchange of objects and they commonly distributed items of personal use, ranging from clothing to reliquaries in their wills.¹ Using ideas drawn from anthropological approaches to material culture, where objects have long been analysed with a view to understanding the beliefs and values of individuals and communities,² historians are now analysing items of material culture and their trajectories in the early modern period as a means of investigating relationships, identities and cultural beliefs as well as market forces, patronage and political activity.³ There is a general agreement that clothing can be used as a conveyor of social meaning, and, when exploited in a gift context, can be manipulated to extend power, emotional, and sometimes legal, over others. This has been discussed both in relation to women from the lower socio-economic classes and to those from the upper echelons of the nobility, however, the purpose of this chapter is to address some of these

¹ See for example: Ashley, 'Material and Symbolic Gift Giving'; Mackinnon, 'Rural Women and Bequests of Clothing'; Cavallo, 'What did Women Transmit? Ownership and Control of Household Goods and Personal Effects in Early Modern Italy', pp. 38-53; and, on gift-exchange outside wills and testaments, Ago, 'Donne, doni e public relations'.

² For an innovative discussion of the limits of the use of clothing as language from an anthropological perspective, see Grant McCracken, 'Clothing as Language: An Object Lesson in the Study of the Expressive Properties of Material Culture', in *Material Anthropology: Approaches to Material Culture*, ed. by Barrie Reynolds and Margaret A. Stott (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 103-33. For a review of the influence of anthropological approaches to gift-giving within the historical discipline, see Bijsterveld, 'The Medieval Gift as Agent'.

³ For a recent example, see O'Malley and Welch, *The Material Renaissance*.

issues in relation to the female consort. The analysis of the acquisition, consumption and distribution of material culture by the Habsburg Archduchesses can be particularly useful because, as I have discussed in section one, their access to independent and officially sanctioned means of wielding power and asserting their position publicly could depend on a variety of factors. The extent to which the Duchesses chose to invest in dress, and the different ways they sought to make use of it as a visual language, offers a means of further understanding the position of the female consort, and the avenues of expression that were open to her.

The documentary sources available in the archives provide the evidence for an analysis of the ways in which the Duchesses created their personae and sought to manage those of the members of their courts, and the wider community. They can also reveal the extent to which they were able or wished to make use of clothing and dress as a means of creating and maintaining networks of patronage and mutually beneficial relationships with court members, merchants and haberdashers, and relatives and contacts outside the confines of the city. In this chapter I investigate the extent to which the Duchesses' were able to procure clothing for themselves and for members of their court in order to construct networks and extend patronage; I also discuss the gifting of textiles in order to create and sustain networks of contacts. Then, in chapter seven, I analyse the Duchesses' use of dress to make public statements, highlight status and allegiances and declare their appropriation and self-identification with particular cultural values, such as piety or *liberalitas*.

The Florentine archive has proved the most fruitful in terms of the information available. Of the three Duchesses, the largest quantity of data pertains to Giovanna de' Medici: many of the *Guardaroba* registers have survived, alongside a large collection of receipts and bills directly addressed to or relating to her from her first year at the Florentine court in 1566 till circa 1574, four years prior to her death. These receipts detail the acquisition of a varied assortment of objects, ranging from horses to gold salts, jewellery, candles, chests and water proof cloths to wrap them in, as well as bills for postage expenses for sending and receiving letters and parcels from her relatives in Austria and Germany, and for paying tax duties in various cities. However, the vast majority of receipts relate to purchases of textiles and haberdashery. These are clearly to be paid for by Giovanna in accordance with the terms of her double allowances – one officially noted down as paid to her monthly, as her general

allowance, and the other paid yearly, to cover the clothing and dress of her ladies.⁴ The fact that almost all the receipts and lists of purchases are explicitly addressed to Giovanna demonstrates that she was the ultimate point of reference for all merchants and haberdashers when they sought payment for their services, rather than the Duke, and the implications of this will be discussed later. The presence of these accounts, incomplete and imprecise as they are, does more, however, than allow us to declare that Giovanna was ultimately in charge of providing most of the clothing for herself and her court. They also tell us more than that the merchants negotiated with members of her court rather than the Duke's officials. Together with her *Guardaroba* records, they can be analysed for evidence of Giovanna's personal tastes, potential favourites amongst her courtiers, the roles her courtiers fulfilled, and the types of expenditure she favoured.

Unfortunately, the archives in Mantua and Ferrara do not provide the same degree of evidence either in quantity or in quality. Nevertheless, it is possible to make certain deductions, and I have supplemented what evidence there is with further information drawn from the posthumous 'Lives' written about the Duchess of Mantua and an anonymous diary that discusses the clothing of both the Duchess of Florence and that of Ferrara in some detail. I also draw on the last wills and testaments that survive for both the Duchess of Mantua and the Duchess of Ferrara, which include information on bequests of jewellery and clothing. Because of the disparity of the available evidence for Eleonora and Barbara, and for Giovanna, I will primarily be using the Duchesses of Mantua and Ferrara for comparative purposes, but they will serve a key function in complicating our vision of the role and activities of the female consort and deepening our understanding of the variety of experiences she faced and the choices that were available to her.

Clothing and Patronage in the City

...22 *braccia* of white satin paid at *lire* 7 a *scudo* amounts to *lire* 154 – 22 *scudi*...

We Lorenzo del Giocondo and Benedetto Rucellai [?] have received on this day the 2nd of March the above-stated 22 *scudi* as the balance owed us for the present bill and for her Highness from Sir Giovanni Talenti, her agent, and testifying to this, I the above Benedetto Rucellai have written the present receipt in my own hand on this day...⁵

⁴ ASF, Depositeria Generale Parte Antica 642, 643.

⁵ '...Braccia ventidua a pagato di rasso bianco per y sette per ▼ monta y154 – ▼22...Noi Lorenzo del Giocondo e benedetto rucellai [?] habba riceuto questo di 2 di marzo ▼ventidua sopradetti per resto del

While Giovanna appears to have liaised with the merchants in Florence and abroad through her own courtiers, and sent payments to them via her own officials, the evidence available for the Duchesses of Mantua and Ferrara appears to be more ambiguous. I have found only scattered references to the buying or provision of clothing for Eleonora, Duchess of Mantua, and her court. These references are held in the Mantuan State Archive in *filza* 3141, which is entitled ‘Bilanci, conti, spese ecc’ (balance sheets, accounts, expenditure etc.) and pertains to the years 1574 to 1595. This bundle of papers contains notes detailing the amounts paid to the Duchess, monthly or every two months, together with short entries such as the following: ‘expenditure for clothing Her Most Serene Highness and all her court in mourning’⁶ dating to 1587, after the Duke Guglielmo had died. The fact that these expenditures, both the monthly provisions, and single items such as the above *spese*, all come from a central ducal *camera* (the administrative office in charge of financial and economic affairs⁷) suggests that all payments were arranged and paid for centrally in Mantua, rather than by the Duchess’ own officials. This is supported by a single piece of evidence contained in a different file, where the courtier Benedetto Abondi sends the bill for payment of various textiles, including white veil and white silk, to the Duke’s court (‘la corte del serenissimo signor prencipe nostro’).⁸ This indicates that the Duchess was not as directly involved in the process of acquiring textiles for herself and her courtiers as her sister Giovanna. However, this does not mean that the Mantuan Duchess did not have any say in what she wanted herself and her courtiers to wear, as I will discuss later on.

The evidence for Barbara is even sparser – no receipts relating to clothes bought for or by her survive. This, added to the fact that she appears to have received an annual provision that was substantially inferior to that of her two sisters, might indicate that she had little direct involvement in the purchase of materials and negotiation with the merchants of her city. However, although the details of the particular arrangements set in place for these Duchesses may never come to light, the key issue that such a discussion does raise is the potential degree of separation between the female consort

presente conto e per sua alteza da messer Giovanni talenti agente di quella et in fede io benedetto rucellai sopradetto ho fatto la presente ricevuta di mano proprio questo di sopradetto...’. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, p. 125.

⁶ ‘Spese da vestire Madama serenissima et tutta la sua corte di corotto’. ASM, AG 3141 (loose folded sheet), p. 375.

⁷ Guerzoni, ‘La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna’ (p. 91).

⁸ ASM, AG 401, Fascicolo D.XII n.7, p. 445.

and the merchants and haberdashers from whom materials were bought, and the impact of such distance or lack of it on the potential opportunities for patronage and the building of useful networks of relationships between the parties concerned.

Giovanna's predecessor, Eleonora de Toledo had bought most of her textiles from a variety of different merchants and artisans in Florence. This had been a clear matter of Medici policy, aimed at fostering local business and avoiding privileging one particular shop over another.⁹ The arrangements set in place for Giovanna, according to which she had the freedom to choose from whom she made purchases and to do so independently of the Duke's officials,¹⁰ enabled her to follow in this tradition. The evidence of her accounts indicates that many of the textiles she bought came from Florence and from a variety of sources within the city. Just as Eleonora made purchases from the Capponi, Rucellai and Torrigiani merchant families, so too did Giovanna.¹¹ However, Giovanna appears also to have favoured a selection of other Florentine merchant families and abandoned some whom Eleonora had favoured. So, for example, the Pucci, Corsini, Martelli and Buondelmonti are not to be found in Giovanna's accounts, but they are listed by Orsi Landini as families who supplied Eleonora with textiles. Instead, Giovanna appears to have relied primarily on the Salviati family, together with Bernardo Mazzochio, and the Mazinghi silk merchants, and especially the Gherardi family. Nonetheless, even though the names may have changed, it is evident that Giovanna was following a clear methodology in her textiles buying, aimed at encompassing a wide variety of suppliers from amongst the leading Florentine merchants and haberdashers. In doing so, Giovanna was able to distribute her patronage across a broad swath of Florentine commercial enterprises. This benefitted the

⁹ Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, p. 24.

¹⁰ What is meant by 'Duke's officials' should perhaps be clarified here. As we now know from the analysis of the Florentine court structures in chapter four, there was no clear division between the male and the female court in terms of authority, and the Duke was able to, and did intervene on occasion in the running of his wife's court. However, the people Giovanna employed to buy materials, pay merchants and transport items to and from the merchants or convents and the shared Ducal *Guardaroba* whence they were then made up into clothing and/or distributed to the intended recipients appear to have been almost always members of her own court, rather than the Duke's, and they would have been recognised as such by the merchants and convents who received them.

¹¹ For example: 'Addi x dotobre 1570 noj niccolo et francesco Capponj [?] setaioli abiamo riceuto questo di detto da charllo dilesandro gianfigliazi R dugento diecj di moneta y iiii Bii [?] quali ci pagha per la Serenissima giovanna daustraia gran principessa di toschana e neoi riceviamo per le sudette robe...' (On this day 10th of October 1570 we Niccolo and Francesco Capponi silk merchants have received on this same day from Carlo di Alessandro Gianfigliazzi two hundred and ten *scudi* four *lire* and two *denari* which he pays for the Most Serene Giovanna of Austria Grand Princess of Tuscany and we receive it for the above-mentioned textiles... [which included rich white satin for dressing the ladies in waiting and white sewing silk]). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 281.

Florentine manufacturers, as a greater number of them were able to rely on a steady stream of commissions, rather than seeing the creation of a small number of monopolies.¹² It also allowed Giovanna to increase her visibility as an independent source of patronage in the city in a way that was denied to her sisters. For example, if we look at Eleonora's situation in Mantua, there is a story recounted by her eulogist, the Jesuit Father Antonio Folcario, in which he describes how she acquired meat and fish products for her court during the year. According to Folcario, Eleonora arranged through an official from her own court ('un ufficiale della sua Corte') to contract with a single butcher, fishmonger, fowler to provide the necessary provisions for her court for the year.¹³ This meant that one supplier had a bulk contract. They may well have sub-contracted the work to a variety of small enterprises, but the key contact between the Duchess and the wider community was lost, as the latter would have looked to the main contractor rather than the Duchess for support. Such public visibility may have been less important to Eleonora as she had other means of extending her patronage, for example in her role administering justice, as I have discussed in chapter two. Nevertheless, Folcario describes her concern when one of these contractors lost money in the arrangement and notes her efforts to ensure that he was appropriately remunerated, despite, he says, the legal validity of the original contract. She supposedly said that she must make up the difference that he has lost, if not in the name of justice, then in the name of charity ('se non per obbligo di giustizia, almeno per ragione di carità'). This story suggests that Eleonora was preoccupied with clientage and with ensuring that she was both charitable and just.¹⁴ In contrast, Giovanna did not rule while Francesco was absent, nor does she appear to have held any role in the administration of justice. Unlike her two sisters, she also failed to leave any physical monument to her reign.¹⁵ However, by creating links with a broad spectrum of merchants across Florence and beyond, she sustained an important sector of Florentine society, and she created political as well as

¹² Other, practical considerations may also have promoted this choice, for example the necessity of ensuring a sufficient quantity of materials. There are frequent occasions, in fact, where Giovanna was forced to acquire different quantities of materials from different merchants and this is presumably because insufficient quantities were available from single operatives. For example on one occasion she buys green velvet from both Bernardo Lastricati and Angelo della Casa on the same day: ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, pp. 289, 291.

¹³ A similar situation where a salaried official took charge of organising purchases and choosing suppliers appears to have existed in Ferrara. See Guido Guerzoni, 'The Social World of Price Formation: Prices and Consumption in Sixteenth-Century Ferrara', in *The Material Renaissance*, ed. by Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 85-105.

¹⁴ Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora*, p. 98.

¹⁵ Barbara founded the Conservatorio delle Orfane di Santa Barbara, while Eleonora helped to fund the foundation of the College of the Jesuits in Mantua. See chapter three, note 23, and chapter two, note 38.

commercial contacts, potentially advancing or intervening on their or their families' behalf at court. This extended not only to merchants but also to the inhabitants of the monasteries who actively participated in the manufacturing life of the city. Indeed one of the Silk Guild's statutes of 1580 indicates that monasteries occupied a key role in the industry:

The nuns of the monasteries are allowed to use false gold and silver to make hair nets, flowers and garlands, and other types of work, as long as they are not woven, for the use of any person and in any place...¹⁶

An example of the benefits Giovanna's patronage could bring to those whose work she sponsored is the petition from the nun Maria Marescotti from the Monastery of Santa Maria della Concezione in Siena, chosen by Giovanna as her embroiderer. Maria thanks the Duchess for being granted the position of *ricamatrice* (embroiderer) and asks the Duchess to take on her niece Cassandra Marescotti as a lady-in-waiting.¹⁷

There appears to have been some competition amongst the convents for attracting the patronage of important members of the ducal family. Another *filza* in the archive contains a letter which details a gift of textiles to Giovanna from the Abbess of the Convent of l'Annunziata in San Miniato. These are described as 'lavori che si fanno nel nostro Convento' and are sent in thanks for Giovanna's intervention in arranging for a spiritual father to supervise them. She also writes that should Giovanna like these 'lavori', then she will be happy to send as many as she wishes to have. This was no doubt a letter of thanks, but just as the gifts mentioned above had more than one function, so this choice of present may also have had an ulterior motive behind it, procuring Giovanna's continued patronage of their work. The accounts reveal that Giovanna was a habitual employer of a variety of monasteries in the city of Florence and outside. Her receipts mention the monasteries of San Luca, of San Francesco, San Giovannino and Monte Domini, as well as San Giuliano, Santa Maria a Monticelli, San Lapo and others. The documents detail orders for shirts to be sewn and embroidered,¹⁸ for pillows to be decorated with net and fringe, for head coverings and endless supplies

¹⁶ Marina Carmignani, *Ricami e merletti nelle chiese e nei monasteri di Prato dal XVI al XIX secolo* (Prato: Nuova Zincografia Fiorentina, 1985), p. 13. 'A poter usare ori et arienti falsi per fare reti da capo, fiori e ghirlande et altri lavori purchè non siano tessuti, le quali sorti di lavoro si concedano potersi fare dalle monache delli monasteri per uso di qualsiasi persona e luogo...'

¹⁷ ASF, MdP 5925, p. 74.

¹⁸ Where the work is specified in the accounts, 77 shirts, both male and female, are worked on in different monasteries in the period from 1566 to 1572. The number of handkerchiefs is even higher, resting, when specified, at a total of 204 for the same period. ASF, GM 101.

of handkerchiefs, plus lace and collars as well as, on occasion, liturgical vestments such as surplices. They also sewed ornate gold and silver embroidery for the ladies-in-waiting's clothing.¹⁹ Giovanna's employment of nuns may be viewed within the context of religious piety and the fulfilment of the religious duties traditionally allocated to the Duchess and particularly important in the case of the Habsburg sisters, militant as they were in the service of the Counter Reformation.²⁰ It is likely that she also patronised a wide variety of convents for the same reason she employed a broad range of Florentine merchants and haberdashers, in order to increase the knowledge of her support for local markets and to ensure that she could rely on the greatest possible degree of loyalty from the citizens of Florence in return, many of whose leading families would have had sisters, daughters or nieces in monasteries, as Maria Marescotti's letter demonstrates. In patronising the nuns, she could also ensure that the products she received were of excellent quality and competitively priced, as their work was perceived as appropriate and to be encouraged, but also as 'a gift to God', rather than an opportunity for profit.²¹ Despite her support for the convents, Giovanna did not feel the need to pay her bills for the work she commissioned with any degree of promptness. The Duchess often made presents of food and other items to particular nuns in convents, but at the same time, she sustained a straightforward business relationship with them, and this included delays in payment, as a letter addressed to the Countess of Bagno, Giovanna's house-stewardess, from the Prioress of San Giuliano, demonstrates:

Magnificent Madam [?], may you always be happy. I think Your Ladyship knows that we sent back the twelve little handkerchiefs to Madam Elizabeth before your return and we never received payment for them...now that you have returned we place great confidence that you will send the money and ... will not fail us as we are in great need and I think that if you knew our great need you would rescue us, as it is all charity as they say and as we believe that we are poor nuns and we help ourselves with our work...²²

¹⁹ See for example, ASF, GM 89, p. 112r.

²⁰ Many convents struggled to support their inmates and there are frequent letters to Giovanna and her sisters highlighting their lack of food supplies and other necessities, for example from the Abbess of the convent of the Murate to Giovanna in 1571, ASF, MdP 5925, p. 309. Tomas points out that Medici women also viewed their support of religious institutions as following in a tradition that harked back to the fourth century patronage of convents by female followers of St Jerome. Tomas, *The Medici Women*, p. 85.

²¹ If they started to charge high prices for trousseaux work they could face considerable disapproval. Kate Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 321-23.

²² 'Magnifica madona marg.[?] felicita sempre. Penso Vostra Signoria sappi chome sirimando le dodici pezette a Madona lixabetta avanti che tornassi enonmai ciamandato edenari...ora che siate tornata

This extract, as well as proving that Giovanna could be tardy in the settling of her debts, also demonstrates the understanding that commissioning nuns to work for her was a part of her wider charitable duties. The quantity of debts Giovanna appears to have left after her death in 1578 suggests that she was less worried than her sister Eleonora about satisfying her creditors, and her policy of employing many, rather than acquiring a single contractor, may have been directly related to ensuring that she avoided becoming heavily indebted to a single operative. At her death Giovanna owed substantial sums to many different merchants²³ - those whose businesses she patronised may have been more willing to wait until her death for her debts to be satisfied (according to custom, the husband would satisfy the debts of his wife after her death) if those sums were relatively small and did not threaten the running of their enterprise.

Although Giovanna's activity in the field of consumption was not innovative (her predecessor Eleonora de Toledo had also patronised many different merchants and haberdashers in Florence, and she too had left debts to be paid at her death) it allowed her to follow Medici policy and comply with the system in place, but at the same time take full advantage of the opportunities it offered for strengthening her position in Florence and engaging in local patronage relationships. Although Giovanna's relationship with the Medici family was at times strained, and, as I will show, she could be ambiguous in the presentation of her identity through the styles and colours she wore and she chose for her ladies, it would have been against her interests to alienate a large proportion of the Florentine population by refusing to buy their products or sponsor their industries. It is within this context that we should see not only Giovanna's role in the textile industry as a consumer, but also her active investment in the manufacturing process. Entries in the *Guardaroba* accounts under her name include payments made for harvesting mulberries for silk worms, for taking the harvested silk to the Convent of the Innocenti to be warped, and for working and dying it.²⁴ This kind of involvement in the manufacturing industry was not uncommon, even for ladies of noble rank. Renata Ago offers as an example of this involvement the Marquise Vittoria Patrizi Spada, who set

cirachomandiamo assai gli mandate e per la passione del nostro signore noncimanachte perche siamo ingranecessita e penso sesapessi egranbisongno cine velgli chaveresti dele hore, essento dutta charita chome sidicie e chome ritegniamo siamo povere monache eci haiutiamo cholnostro lavoro...'. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 377.

²³ ASF, Depositeria Generale Parte Antica 643, Fascicolo dated 1577-1578.

²⁴ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, pp. 148v, 162r; Fascicolo dated 1571, p. 381r.

up a silk-worm farm and produced silk, at the end of the seventeenth century.²⁵ In Giovanna's case, both her father-in-law Cosimo and her husband Francesco were actively involved in fostering the silk industry, promoting the cultivation of Mulberry trees and the production of raw silk in various areas around Florence, such as the Val di Nievole and the Val d'Elsa.²⁶ Again, here Giovanna can be viewed as investing in the role of independent patron, setting herself up alongside the Medici family, employing not only court workers, but outside enterprises, such as the Innocenti, and not only supporting Florentine merchants with her patronage, but also providing extra work for the silk makers themselves by investing in the production of silk herself.

Textiles as Gifts

Giovanna fostered the textile industry in Florence, not only by buying items for her own use and that of her court, but also by ensuring their distribution abroad. She did this primarily by sending textiles as gifts, for example to her sister in Bavaria, to whom she sent various items in response to the latter's request for embroidered cloth for her birthday,²⁷ and who she supplied with gold cloth on other unspecified occasions listed in the accounts as well.²⁸ As Roberta Orsi Landini points out in the book accompanying

²⁵ Renata Ago, 'Il linguaggio del corpo', in *La moda*, ed. by Carlo Belfanti and Fabio Guisberti (Turin: Einaudi, 2003), pp. 117-47 (p. 131).

²⁶ Rosalia Bonito Fanelli, 'I drappi d'oro: economia e moda a Firenze nel Cinquecento', in *Le arti del principato mediceo*, ed. by Candace Adelson (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1980) (p. 409).

²⁷ 'Vostra Altezza sa bene che il mio marito et io sogliamo una volta l'anno presentarci l'uno l'altro. Egli prepara et mj ordina una camera artitfiosa, pero voglio pregar' con ogni affetto l'Altezza Vostra se ella mi potessi in cio esser d'aiuto in farmi haver un pezo artitfioso, Perche io intendo che il Duca vecchio ha bene qualche cosa artitfiosa. Vostra Altezza me ne farà un gran servitio, et se gliene potrò render' il cambio, ne harò molto piacere et lo farò con ogni diligentia, et che io l'habbia inanzi il dì di San Nicola...'. (Your Highness knows very well that my husband and I give each other presents once a year. He is preparing a skilfully decorated room for me. Therefore I beg Your Highness with all affection to help me if you can in letting me have a skilfully wrought piece of cloth, as I have heard that the old Duke [Cosimo] has some such things. Your Highness will do me a great service and if I am able to return the favour, I will willingly do so, and may I please have it before St Nicholas' day...). ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, p. 35. While the rather vague 'pezo artitfioso' could refer to the weave or the pattern of the cloth, the cancelled out words 'di pano ricamato, intessuto, ricco', then substituted with the generic 'artitfioso' suggest that she wanted embroidered cloth, possibly with gold or silver. This letter is also intriguing because it is asking her to intervene with Cosimo rather than asking Cosimo himself. This demonstrates once again Giovanna's role as intermediary between her natal family and her marital one.

²⁸ The accounts note a payment made for sending two mules weighed down with gold cloth to Bavaria, presumably again to the Duchess Anna or her husband, although this is unspecified. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1569, p. 340. The term 'cloth of gold' could embrace different types of textile and unfortunately in the accounts and letters, the textile in question is rarely described beyond the words 'drappo d'oro'. Figures 11 and 12 provide two examples of cloth of gold, one a sixteenth-century velvet section of Italian manufacture, the other a clerical robe, possibly of Spanish manufacture. In this type of textile, the ground cloth could be made of a variety of materials which were then either covered completely or patterned using metal and silk threads – often yellow silk with gold thread to enhance the colour and shine of the cloth. Some of these textiles, like figure 11, may have been 'tissues', with raised

the exhibition on the restored Medici clothes, the greatest queens in Europe had to buy their gold brocades from Florentine agents.²⁹ Sending textiles abroad to her relatives not only benefitted the Florentine manufacturers, it also aided Giovanna in her efforts to highlight the importance of her station. Her sister, the recipient of these goods, was married to the Duke of Bavaria. Giovanna may have wished to prove that although she was married to a less important family and governed a smaller state, she was able to play a role in one of Europe's key industries. However, gifts of textiles, as I will discuss further in my section on patronage at court, were also a vital way of constructing and maintaining important networks of alliances and contacts. As the Duchess of Bavaria wrote to Giovanna in her request for textiles:

Your Highness will do me a great service and if I am able to return the favour, I will willingly do so.³⁰

Here Anna is explicitly revealing the reciprocal relationship set up between the two sisters. But even where this is not so clearly set out it is possible to see the advantages sought by the gifting of such items. So, for example, Giovanna is described by the Ferrarese ambassador Conegrani as giving cloth of gold to a Neapolitan noblewoman called *Donna Sofia*, who was accompanying her daughter, a future lady-in-waiting to the Emperor's daughter, on her journey to Austria.³¹ *Donna Sofia* was welcomed by Giovanna in Florence, on her way up to the Viennese court. As well as being given her own present of cloth of gold, she was also put in charge of transporting some of the cloth of gold bought by the Empress. In this way textiles created a bond between Giovanna, *Donna Sofia*, her daughter, the Empress and the Empress' daughter and Giovanna gained or reinforced her contacts in Austria, Spain and Naples.

As well as helping to create and make visible ongoing relationships and networks, and furthering her patronage relationships with the Florentine textile industry, gifting textiles also enabled Giovanna to build on her reputation for generosity and liberality, traits that were considered essential in a good prince and were also advocated

loops of gold or silver thread. See Lisa Monnas, "'Tissues' in England during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", *Bulletin du CIETA*, 75 (1998), 62-80.

²⁹ Roberta Orsi Landini, 'L'amore del lusso e la necessità della modestia: Eleonora fra sete e oro', in *Moda alla corte dei Medici: gli abiti restaurati di Cosimo, Eleonora e don Garzia* (Florence: Centro Di, 1993), pp. 35-45 (p. 44). The Ferrarese Ambassador Conegrani notes that the Empress bought 6,000 *scudi*'s worth of gold cloth from Florence in 1569. See Appendix 3, letter dated 3 December 1569.

³⁰ ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, p. 35.

³¹ Appendix 3, letters dated 24 November and 3 December 1569.

for princesses, as a way of gaining friends and ensuring benefits in return. The following excerpt is an example of Giovanna's activities in this field:

The day before the eve of the Annunciation, Your Highness' gentleman, Alessandro Neroni arrived at this holy house, with the great present that Your Highness has made to this most glorious Lady. As soon as it was unpacked it was presented in the Holy Chapel in Your Highness' name and it filled me and all these Reverend Fathers with joy and unspeakable happiness, seeing how generous Your Highness has been towards this holy House, from which one can clearly see the great affection Your Highness bears towards it, which will smooth and ease Your Highness' path to Heaven, upon which path, even if Your Highness still walks upon it and is solicitous with yet further worthy works, yet this one, as highly noteworthy, will be also highlighted[?]. because of the obligation we Fathers have for this service, with our orations to the most holy Mother of God to whom we continually pray for the safekeeping of Your most Serene person and all your house for the universal good, and the particular benefit of this holy place and myself. Your Highness will hear from the above mentioned Alessandro how mass and vespers were sung with the intervention of the Archbishop of Nazareth dressed in all Your Highness' gifts, and with Your Highness' portrait hung as Your Highness commanded.³²

The author of this missive, Roberto Sassatello, who held an important role at Loreto and became Archbishop of Pesaro in 1576, pinpoints Giovanna's liberality towards the holy site, in the form of gifts of vestments and a portrait, as evidence of the strength of her feelings and devotion. He immediately responded to Giovanna's gift by sending her envoy Alessandro Neroni back with a present of his own: a picture of the Holy House of Loreto in gold and lapis lazuli. However, the return gift of this picture did not signify the end of the relationship; instead it bolstered an ongoing, mutually beneficial, association between Loreto and the Duchess. Thus Sassatello added in a postscript that a

³² 'L'Antivigilia della Nuntiata giunse a questa santa Casa il signor Alessandro Neroni, suo gentiluomo, con il notabil presente che Vostr'Altezza ha fatto a questa gloriosissima Madonna. Il quale tosto che fu scoperto, fu presentato in santa Capella a nome di Vostra Altezza e fu ben tale che riempi me et tutti questi Reverendi sacerdoti di gaudio e contento inenarrabile, vedendo quanto ella sia stata liberale verso questa santa Casa, da che si può far chiaro argomento della molta affettione ch'ella vi porta, mezo sufficientissimo a farsi facile la via del Cielo, nella quale ancor che camini e sij solecita con altre sue degne opere, questa come notabile molto, sarà pur'anco rapresentata, per l'obbligo c'habbiamo noi sacerdoti di questo servitio, con le nostre orationi alla sacratissima Madre di Dio nostra signora et di continuo pregata per la conservatione di Sua Serenissima persona, et tutta sua casa, per universal' bene et particular' di questo santo luogo et mio. Lo haver' cantato Messa et Vespro con l'intervento di Monsignor Arcivescovo di Nazarette parato tutto de suoi doni et appeso il suo ritratto com'ella comanda tutto intenderà Vostra Altezza dal sudetto signor Alessandro'. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, p. 96, letter dated 26 March 1574.

certain Raffaella Nicolini received the service required ‘as all those who are recommended by Your Highness will’.³³ Here we have a clear example of the type of relationships gift-giving could foster and maintain and how they enabled the female consort to extend influence and control events. Not only did Sassatello ensure that her recommendations with regard to Nicolini were followed, he also described how the relationship between the Duchess and the Holy House was being made visible: the Archbishop performed the service dressed in the vestments she had given and her portrait was hung precisely as she commanded. In this way Sassatello surrendered control of the recipients of her gifts and the gifts themselves to the Duchess and ensured that there was a witnessing public who were hence made aware of not only the Duchess’ generosity, but also her authority – the fact that the Archbishop and the very house of Loreto were her clients. In return, Loreto’s profile was significantly raised and it could hope to attract increasing numbers of visitors and wealthy pilgrim/patrons. Sassatello’s letter reveals the ongoing performance of a relationship which is described and whose terms are expressed through the gifts themselves, the way they are presented, the letters that accompany them, and the way that the objects are then used and shown, either to those in the vicinity or further afield, as I will discuss further in the next chapter. The public recognition of suitable generosity and influence over an important section of society was not the only advantage Giovanna reaped from this relationship, however; Sassatello also writes that they are all praying for her and that she has indubitably smoothed her way to Heaven through the generosity of her gifts to the holy Church. In this way, Giovanna was engaging in a three-way gift relationship – between herself, the Holy Sanctuary, and God. Nevertheless, just because on this occasion, her gifts were well-received and praised, this does not mean that all of the Duchess’ attempts to enhance her reputation and gain public admiration worked. There is a letter in the archives regarding a gift of textiles Giovanna made to a Church in Montevarchi, presumably the Chapel of the Holy Milk in the Canonica di San Lorenzo, in which the Duchess tells her husband of her intention to take back her gift of cloth of gold because of the scandal that arose.³⁴ Unfortunately no detail is supplied on the scandal and there are no further references to it, but it does indicate that gifts could go wrong, and that patrons had to tread carefully in dispensing their riches.

³³ ‘come saranno sempre tutti che vengono raccomandati da Vostra Altezza’. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 241.

³⁴ ASF, MdP 5926, p. 146.

Gift Strategies

The Ferrarese ambassador, Conegrani, described one of Giovanna's gifts of textiles, to the Cardinal Michele Bonelli (*Cardinale Alessandrino*) as *galanterie*.³⁵ Conegrani's choice of the word *galanterie* is a key indicator of contemporary perceptions of the role of the female consort in gift-giving. In 1576, shortly after the murder of Francesco's sister-in-law Leonora de Toledo-Medici and his sister Isabella de' Medici-Orsini by their respective husbands, the Duke decided to send Philip II of Spain a crucifix by the hand of Benvenuto Cellini. His aim was to soothe Philip's anger at the murder of Leonora, the only daughter of Don Garcia di Toledo, his former viceroy in Sicily, and also persuade him to accept the use of the titles of 'Altezza' and 'Serenissimo' which he had so far refused to give him. Detailed instructions for the gift have survived, and these include the following extract:

You will also take a box of silk and gold flowers with some fine hair ornaments and other pleasing trifles, including hair-nets, from the convents here. You are to present them to the two daughters of His Catholic Majesty, on behalf and in the name of our daughters the Princesses Leonora and Anna, with the letter that they have written to their Highnesses explaining that these things are made in the convents here and they send them as tokens in order to introduce themselves as their Highnesses' devoted servants...³⁶

Earlier, in 1567, the ambassador Conegrani noted that the envoy sent by Philip II to congratulate Giovanna upon the birth of her baby was given six pairs of perfumed gloves and other similar objects by the Duchess, while Francesco gave him a Spanish horse.³⁷ In both these examples, the word the chroniclers use to describe the women's gifts is *galanterie* and in both cases the Duke provides gifts of far higher value. These situations indicate that male rulers and officials chose to characterise female gifts as subordinate and of secondary importance, accompanying the main male-orchestrated gifts almost as optional extras. It also indicates that certain objects were seen as appropriate gifts from women. The link between clothing and items of female adornment, and women's gifts, seems to have far-reaching roots. John Carmi Parsons quotes a passage from Stephen Langtons' thirteenth-century 'Sermo de Virginibus', in

³⁵ See Appendix 3, letter dated 18 November 1570.

³⁶ Rosemarie Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain: Patron of the Arts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2004), p. 97. It was during this period of time that Giovanna was attempting to get word to the Emperor through the Duke of Ferrara of her problems with Francesco. It may have been for this reason that Francesco chose to send presents from his daughters, rather than attempting to ensure his wife's cooperation.

³⁷ See Appendix 3, letter dated 8 September 1567.

which Mary's three gifts of a gold belt of chastity, gloves of charity, and a robe or hood of humility, are paralleled with the gifts of a great lady.³⁸ Clothing and accessories were suitable gifts to and from women.

The secondary importance of a woman's gifts is also highlighted in the Ferrarese ambassador's description of the visit to Florence by the Archduke Charles (Karl) in 1569. Conegrani described the gifts the Archduke received as from the Medici family as a whole, i.e. Cosimo, Francesco and Giovanna, or from the Duke alone,³⁹ with no mention of individual gifts from Giovanna at all. The ambassador carefully reported the objects exchanged by the Archduke Charles and the Medici alongside their monetary cost, and he also noted that the Archduke refused to accept all the presents on offer:

Of the other things that their Excellencies are giving to His Highness [Archduke Charles], I understand that he has not wanted to accept anything except the small table and certain horses, but if I hear otherwise I will let Your Excellency know.⁴⁰

This demonstrates the extent to which gift-giving could be part of overt political negotiation, and was therefore conducted between male heads of state rather than their wives. These gifts represent the power, wealth and importance of the family, and were aimed at reinforcing dynastic prestige.⁴¹ As such, the wife, herself a foreigner, frequently financially less solvent, and in this last example also a close blood relation of the competition could not be chosen as the main actor. Given this situation, it was impossible for Giovanna to use these events to attempt to carve out independent relationships by means of large or expensive gifts. The Ferrarese ambassador does note down the value of a gold chain (400 ducats) and a silver vase (200 ducats) she gave to a certain Luca Rem, on his departure for Austria, but he also notes that he was one of her courtiers, and that Francesco gave him the far larger sum of 2,000 ducats. Financially, Giovanna was unable to compete with her husband.

Faced with this situation, the consort had certain options: she was able to construct networks of relationships with those generally ignored by her male relatives, i.e. women, she could send more informal, less expensive gifts,⁴² that relied less on

³⁸ Parsons, 'The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England' (p. 157).

³⁹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 5 May 1569.

⁴⁰ Ibid. If we take Marcello Fantoni's view of gift-giving as an instrument of social control and a means of expressing power, then we can understand why the Archduke chose not to accept all of the gifts that were offered to him. To do so could have lessened rather than enhanced his rank and prestige in relation to the Medici. Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 14.

⁴¹ For a discussion of competitive gifting, see Buettner, 'Past Presents'.

⁴² In this she followed the example set by the Valois women – see Ibid., (p. 614).

economic value, or she could address her overtures to those with whom she had greater freedom to form official relationships, i.e. the Church.⁴³ Giovanna appears to have adopted an unstated strategy of working within carefully defined parameters, focussing her gift-giving on women, religious communities and high-ranking members of the Catholic clergy. The letter to the Count Rocco Linari can be taken as an example of this approach and an attempt by the Duchess to create links with other influential women:

Most Serene Princess, Your Highness will know through the letter [now lost] that my Mistress the Electress [Anna von Dänemark-Wettin] writes to you that I did not fail to make a faithful report, which I was obliged to do by the virtue, greatness, humanity and courtesy that I experienced and received from Your Highness, and also because I am a true, most humble and faithful servant of Your Highnesses, always at your service and commandment, in everything most devoted, entreating Your Highness not to take it badly if she does not give you at present those titles which I would have greatly wished, but I am sure that my master the Elector [of Saxony Augustus I Wettin] will help you more than any prince one could find, the Lord God knows my great affection, and certainly his Highness my Lord will be completely favourable to you and in greater things when asked, but I entreat Your Highness to consider the friendship he offers, seeing that in one [person] you will have the greater number of the other German princes, and it would be a very good idea for Your Highnesses to keep [this friendship] and for them to write often to him, and also Your Highness to the Electress and I am sure that time will bring all things to fruition with the help of the Lord God. Most Serene Highness, my consort most humbly thanks Your Highness for the many lovely gifts you were kind enough to send her, which pleased the Electress so much that she took a good part of them and not knowing what to send in return to Your Highness, she is sending a small press which can be used for many things...⁴⁴

⁴³ For a discussion of women's activities within the field of charity and the Church, see Mackinnon, 'Rural Women and Bequests of Clothing'. Giovanna's role as useful intermediary with the Church has been highlighted in Leuzzi, 'Un'Asburgo a Firenze' (p. 236).

⁴⁴ 'Serenissima Signora Principessa alteza vostra cognosera per la lettera che la signora ellettrice mia Padrona scrive alalteza vostra che non ho manchato di farli quello fedel raporto che meritamente sono hobligato, tanto per la virtu, grandeza, humanita e cortesia che ho cognosuto e ricevuto de lalteza vostra, che alsi per esser io vero vassallo treshumilissimo e fedel servitore de le alteze vostre, comme senpre a ogni loro servittio e comandamento mi troverano dil tutto Affectionatissimo, suplicando lalteza vostra non pigliar per male se lei non li dona per il presente quelli titulli che molto averei desiderato, ma mi assicuro che il signor ellettore mio Padrone gli giovera po esser piu che Principe che si possa trovare, il Signor Idio sa di quanto granda Affectione che io me glinpiego, e certo lalteza dil detto mio signor Padrone li serra dil tutto favorevole e in magior cosa quando serra richiesto, pero suplichio lalteza vostra considerar che amicitia e la sua, visto che in una averanno la piu sana parte de li altri Principi dela germania, eserra molto bene che le loro alteze la mantengono e gli scrivino spesso, e alsi lalteza vostra alla signora ellettrice e mi assicuro che il tempo accomodera ogni cosa con laiuto dil signor iDio. Serenissima Principessa la mia Consorte ringratia treshumilissimamente lalteza vostra di tanti belli presenti che quella si e degnata mandarli de li quali la signora ellettrice glia trovato talmente a grado suo

In this letter the Count appears to be discussing the issue of the title of Grand Duke, which had already been awarded to Cosimo by the Pope, but which had not yet been confirmed by the Emperor. He advises Giovanna to keep writing to the Electress, while the male Medici should write to the Elector. There is thus a clear division along gender lines of the suitable actions to take. He seems to imply that while Giovanna may send letters and gifts to the female party, the Elector's aid should be solicited by her husband and father-in-law.⁴⁵ While the gifts she sent to her sister, Anna of Bavaria, or to Donna Sofia, indicate that Giovanna's gifts to women were not always a tandem exercise, given alongside those by men to men, she did have greater freedom to act as the principal protagonist, rather than a subsidiary agent, in her dealings with the Church. This may have influenced her choice to focus the bulk of her gift-giving on them. Noblewomen had a long tradition of close networking and alliance with the clergy. As Dolly MacKinnon has pointed out, religion offered the possibility of political agency to women in early modern society,⁴⁶ while Anna Coreth has highlighted the involvement of Habsburg women in articulating and disseminating good Catholic practice.⁴⁷ By choosing to direct her patronage towards key Catholic figures and communities, Giovanna was able to side-step the system that demoted her to a position of secondary importance. She sent gifts to the Pope, and to other high-ranking Church members, or important holy places such as the sanctuary of Loreto. By focussing on the clergy, Giovanna was able to operate in a way that did not cause scandal or friction with the Medici, and at the same time, participate on the public stage. She gave presents to the Pope, such as an altar cloth for the Basilica of San Pietro, a public arena visited by the most important members of the Curia. In return, she received gifts and favours, such as the Golden Rose and permission to hear Mass at home, and she could also petition for intervention on behalf of others, such as the Count Giovanni Francesco of Bagno and

che napreso una bona parte e non sapendo cosi prontamente che mandar in Cambio allalteza vostra gli manda una piccola pressa che gli servira amolte cose...'. (letter dated 3 June 1572). ASF, MdP 5925, p. 230. What kind of press this might have been is uncertain, indeed the author of the letter appears somewhat unsure with regard to its purpose.

⁴⁵ Cosimo had in fact been soliciting the Elector's help in the question of precedence from 1557 onwards, a support which finally came through in 1576 when the question was resolved in favour of the Medici by the Emperor Maximilian II. See Barbara Marx, 'L'ossessione della genealogia', in *Corti rinascimentali a confronto: letteratura, musica, istituzioni*, ed. by Barbara Marx, Tina Matarrese and Paolo Trovato (Florence: F. Cesati, 2003), pp. 109-43 (p. 129).

⁴⁶ Mackinnon, 'Rural Women and Bequests of Clothing' (p. 79).

⁴⁷ Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca* (Indiana, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2004), p. xii.

the German students resident in Siena who were being threatened by the Inquisition.⁴⁸ Patronage rarely manifested itself in only one area, or on a single occasion. Gifts were planned and repeated, in order to enable the creation of long-term mutually beneficial relationships. Thus the Pope, upon receipt of a box full of linens stressed the abundance of the gift, saying that it would last his entire life:

I received your letter of the 26th from the hand of the courier Farfanicchio two days ago, together with the box of crimson velvet containing the linens that you wrote to me about, and, since it had arrived in good condition and without visibly having suffered in any way, yesterday morning, according to your orders, I presented it to His Benediction [Pius V] in the name of the Most Serene Princess our Mistress [Giovanna]...adding...that Her Highness had had them made so simply so that His Benediction would use them more willingly, as was desired. You would not believe with what demonstrations of pleasure and tenderness His Holiness received the present, praising it greatly for its beauty and thanking Her Highness, not only for the gift, but for the goodwill that he knew she felt towards him, extending himself on this subject with loving words, and saying that he received many things from Her Highness, without giving her anything and that the rochets [liturgical vestments made of linen and decorated with lace] in particular would last his entire life. His Benediction then ordered that the box, as it was arranged, should be placed in his secret writing room where he kept some of his dearest belongings and where he was sometimes accustomed to retire after receiving people for his own entertainment, and so it was taken there...⁴⁹

The writer of this letter was the Medici ambassador in Rome, Alessandro de' Medici, and the recipient Antonio Serguidi, Francesco de' Medici's secretary. The length and

⁴⁸ See ASF, MdP 1177, Inserto 21, p. 735; chapter one, note 14; ASF, MdP 529, p. 405; chapter five, note 3.

⁴⁹ 'Per mano di Farfanicchio Corriere, mi fu resa due giorni sono la lettera di Vostra Signoria de' XXVI con la consegna della cassetta di velluto chermisi ripiena di linerie che ella mi scriveva, quale si come era venuta ben conditionata et senza vedersi che havessi punto patito, così hiermattina in conformità dell'ordine di Vostra Signoria la presentai a Sua Beneditione a nome della Serenissima Principessa Nostra Signora ...aggiugnendovi ... che s'erano fatte lavorare da Sua Altezza così semplicemente a fine che Sua Beneditione l'havessi ad usare più volentieri, come si desiderava. Non potrebbe credere Vostra Signoria con quanta dimostrazione di contento et di tenerezza Sua Santità ricevesti il presente con lodarlo assai per la bellezza sua et con ringratiare Sua Altezza non solo di quello ma della buona volontà ancora che conosceva che ella teneva verso di lei, distendendosi in questo proposito co' discorso amorevole et con dire che riceveva da Sua Altezza molte cose senza darlene alcuna et che li rocchetti in particolare gli basterebbono tutto il tempo di sua vita. Commesse di poi Sua Beneditione che la cassetta così assetta come era si mettessi in uno suo scrittoio secreto dove tiene alcune cose più care et che è solita ritirarsi qualche volta dopo l'udienze per trattenimento suo, et così vi fu condotta...'. ASF, MdP 1177, Inserto 17, p. 483 (letter dated 1 September 1570). This gift may have been a grander, given its crimson velvet interior, and larger, given that it contained liturgical vestments, version of the the small cyprus wood box given by the Abbess of the convent of Corpus Domini to her brother, the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, in which he kept his handkerchiefs and nightcaps. The gift of such personal objects highlights the intimacy (real or desired) of the relationship. See Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat*, p. 44.

detail of the report indicates a particular interest on the part of the male members of the Medici family in Giovanna's gift-giving activities. As with the gift of *galanterie* from Francesco's daughters, the objects are mediated by Medici officials who are directly answerable to Francesco rather than Giovanna, but unlike Leonora and Anna's gifts, Giovanna's box of linens is not merely accompanying another, greater gift – she is operating as the sole gift-giver and her gift is the centre of attention. This suggests that in the Medici family's relationships with members of the Church, Giovanna was able to become a key actor. This is supported by a letter in which Simone Fortuna at the sanctuary of Loreto turns to her, rather than Francesco, to ask her to try and persuade the Duke to continue building the chapel Cosimo had agreed to sponsor in the basilica:

I do not wish to hide from Your Highness the fact that this church is being marvellously decorated and already they have made an amazing start on the façade, and the whole world desires and hopes that the Most Serene Grand Duke will change his mind and order the Chapel to be built that the Grand Duke Cosimo of glorious memory had already given his consent to, since it is a deed truly worthy of such a prince, and I know Your Highness will condescend to make every effort on our behalf because of your singular goodness and piety, and because of the infinite devotion you bear to this House.⁵⁰

In the religious arena, therefore, Giovanna was able to act as a key liaison with male figures of considerable importance and her gift-giving capabilities were treated seriously by the ambassadors. The relationship between Giovanna and the Pope can be viewed as freely entered upon, and characterised by the optional exchange of gifts and favours.

In this chapter I have discussed the range and extent of the female consort's gift-giving and the opportunities such activity could afford as a means of forging and maintaining networks of patronage, both at court and outside. By comparing the activities of the three female consorts in question, I have shown that they had access to varying degrees of control over the buying and commissioning of clothing, and that they chose to exploit such opportunities according to the other factors that shaped, expanded or curtailed their position and activities at court and within the Duchy. In the next chapter I will examine the duties of patronage and loyalty that bound together duchess

⁵⁰ 'Non voglio tacer' all'Altezza Vostra che questa Chiesa si va ornando mirabilmente et già s'è fatto un stupendo principio alla facciata di fuori, et si desidera et spera da tutto il mondo che il Serenissimo Gran Duca habbi da mutar' proposito et comandar' che si facci la Capella, che accettò già la gloriosa memoria del Gran Duca Cosimo, essendo opera degna veramente di tanto Principe, et so che l'Altezza Vostra si degnerà di farci ogni buono offitio per la singl.re bontà et Religione sua et per la devotione infinita che porta a questa santa Casa.' ASF, MdP 5925, p. 449.

and courtier and the advantages that providing clothing to those around her offered the female consort. I will also examine the importance of dress as a social signifier and the extent to which the Duchesses were able to exploit clothing to express cultural values, highlight appurtenance to particular categories, and hint at conflict and alternative allegiances in a way that avoided direct and irretrievable confrontation.

Chapter Seven

Style and Self-Representation

Introduction

In this chapter I will examine the role of clothing in the creation of the Florentine Duchess' identity and her employment of textiles as a means of making political and cultural statements. Alongside the *Guardaroba* records, valuable sources include letters from private individuals, some anonymous, some not, who discuss what the Duchess or members of her entourage were wearing on particular occasions, as well as printed texts which also include descriptions of her clothing. All of the occasions described are public and of significant import to the Medici family. The chroniclers' efforts to recall and describe details of the clothing the Duchess wore serve as an indication of the importance of dress in the early modern world, and the official recognition of the messages that could be buried in the neckline of a dress, the colour of a robe or the materials used in the creation of a hairstyle.

Clothing and Patronage at Court

The term 'courtier' in Ferrara included all those serving the duke, the duchess and the various princes and princesses of the dynasty inside their private and domestic space on a permanent basis. Although these courts did not enjoy the same political and social prestige as that of the duke, they replicated, on a smaller scale, the same organisational, economic and relational structure, and their members enjoyed the same legal rights and privileges as those of the duke.¹

¹ Guerzoni and Alfani, 'Court History and Career Analysis', (pp. 11-12).

In this quote Guerzoni and Alfani are discussing the situation in Ferrara, yet their argument would appear to be validated for Florence too by the following statement by one of the Florentine Duchess' courtiers:

I Mercher Filgezhofer, German and in the service of the most serene Grand Princess of Tuscany do hereby confess that I have received from You, Sir Giovanni Buontalenti, Assistant in the Chamber of said Lady Princess, forty three gold *scudi*...which I receive and he pays me for my provision and the outfit which said Lady owes me and all for the past month of June.²

Here Giovanna appears to be in charge of providing clothing and upkeep for her own courtiers. And yet, as I have already discussed in section one, the relational and economic structures in the consort's court were not the same as those that bound courtiers within the duke's court precisely because the boundaries between the male and female court could be far more fluid than has previously been argued. Control over court members was not always as straightforward and clearly divided from household to household as might at first appear. We have seen that the duke might intervene to control the loyalty of household members, he might pay certain members' salaries, as we know was the case in both Florence and Ferrara, or he might get involved in the appointment process for courtiers.

This lack of concrete boundaries also transfers into control over objects – the goods as well as the people that occupied the spaces allocated to the female consort. The receipts contained in the *Guardaroba* indicate that Giovanna was responsible for buying a great deal of the textiles for clothing her household. However, she did not control all the objects that surrounded her and were used by her courtiers. There are no indications amongst her receipts that she bought or paid for furnishings such as beds, benches, mattresses and other key items, instead such items appear to be issued by the central *Guardaroba* to the individual household members and returned when worn out or broken. This suggests that such items may not have belonged to the Duchess, but were considered to remain under general ducal i.e. male ownership.³ This fluidity and

² 'Adi primo di luglio 1572 Io Mercher filgezhofer, Todesco, et al servitio della serenissima Gran Principessa di Toscana per questa confesso haver riceuto da Voi messer Giovanni Buontalenti, aiutante di Camera di detta Signora Principessa ▼.di quarantatre d'oro ... quali ricevo et esso mi paga perla mia provisione et vestito che mideve detta signora et tutto per tutto il mese di giugno prossimo passato...'. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 368.

³ See for example, ASF, GM, Libro di Debitori e Creditori 68, pp. 2-3, 6-7. The Libro di Debitori e Creditori had the task of distributing items. It registered the names of those who received the items and those who gave them back.

uncertainty about what the Duchess actually owned is something that may be reflected in Barbara's court in Ferrara. Here again, the ducal administration seems to provide her courtiers with items such as blankets, buckets and other general necessities, distributed through one of her officials, usually her *spenditore* Alessandro Pocaterra. But there is no indication whether she paid for or maintained ownership over them or not.⁴ A document contained in the Modena archive suggests that they were not perceived as being exclusively hers, as it provides an inventory of objects found in Belvedere, and consigned to Alessandro Pocaterra, made after her death, including items such as beds, blankets, mattresses and *spalliere*.⁵ There is no indication that they belonged to the courtiers who had been allocated them, and no suggestion that they were perceived as the Duchess' objects. Certainly there is no mention of such items in her will.

This situation benefits from discussion in relation to Sandra Cavallo's emphasis on the difference between use and consumption, and actual ownership, and the limits on women's personal property,⁶ even in the case of those as high up the social hierarchy as the female consort. Cavallo's argument highlighting the restricted nature of female possessions is substantiated by the evidence provided by Barbara's will. She primarily leaves money and items of a personal nature such as jewellery, clothing and reliquaries. The situation of the Duchess of Mantua is somewhat different. She appears to have had a greater degree of control both in relation to people and in relation to objects – Eleonora in fact leaves some landed property in her will, as well as the more frequent personal possessions, but the level of anxiety she demonstrated in her efforts to secure her hold over the lands demonstrates the unusual nature of the situation and the lack of security women felt in terms of ownership.⁷ Such anxiety could be reinforced by the efforts by male members of the family to ensure that items could not be owned outright by women:

And truthfully we do not know that it matters if we give her the jewels so that she may enjoy them and wear them, on the understanding that they must remain in our house if she

⁴ ASMo, Camera Ducale Estense, Amministrazione della Casa, *Guardaroba* 187. See for example, pp. 6, 7, 11.

⁵ ASMo, ASE, Sezione Casa e Stato 358, Fascicolo 37/1990, p. 7.

⁶ Cavallo, 'What did Women Transmit? Ownership and Control of Household Goods and Personal Effects in Early Modern Italy' (pp. 39, 41).

⁷ The Jesuit Giuseppe Gorzoni states in his history of the College in Mantua that Eleonora's property of Camata had been given to her by her husband but nothing had been put in writing. After her husband's death, he says, Eleonora rushed to ensure that her son, Vincenzo, assigned it to her 'in iscritto et in autentica e legitima forma' ('in writing and in true and legal form'). *Istoria del collegio di Mantova*, ed. by Bilotto and Rurale, p. 80. See Appendix 2.

has no children by you, or, if we give them to her in another way, if she does not have in mind to alienate them [from us], [something which] does not seem honest to us.⁸

In this letter to his son, Alfonso II d'Este, upon his marriage to Lucrezia de' Medici in 1558, Ercole II wrote of his unease and suspicion of the possible actions the new Medici bride might take to keep the jewels that were only supposed to be loaned to her. Overall, the evidence provided by the *Guardaroba* files, together with the Duchesses' testaments, point towards a lack of control on the consort's part, not only over the people but the physical objects within their courts. This in turn amplifies the importance of those areas where they did possess some degree of independence of action and legal ownership.

When areas of official control were restricted, relationships, family ties and factors such as the Duchesses' personal financial situations acquired paramount importance. When these were beset with ambiguity if not downright hostility, the wife had to make use of any opportunities afforded to her. Giovanna maintained independent binary relationships with her female courtiers through the medium of clothing. As a consequence, the consumption and circulation of clothing, charted in registers such as the *libri di vestiri* and in the *memoriali di manufattori* as well as in the receipts contained in *filza* 101 of the *Guardaroba*, assumes a high value.⁹ Clothing was the means at Giovanna's disposal to construct patronage networks with the female members of her court and to highlight personal values and allegiances.

Giovanna's predecessor, Eleonora de Toledo, had also enjoyed considerable independence in relation to dress. She had avoided excessive richness in her clothes and the colours she chose for herself and for her ladies. This was in keeping with the overall Medici policy of avoiding inappropriate ostentation. Her husband, the Duke Cosimo, still operated more as a private *pater familias* than a great prince.¹⁰ However, Giovanna, the daughter of an Emperor and a Queen, chose to break with this tradition and invest in expensive displays of finery. While Eleonora's ladies were dressed in wool with silk appliqué bands, Giovanna's ladies appear to have been given very elaborately decorated clothes; for example, the four ladies who did not accompany Giovanna on a trip to Siena

⁸ Langdon, *Medici Women*, p. 143.

⁹ The *libri di vestiri* listed what came in from the *Guardaroba del Taglio*, where clothing was made up, and what went out to individual court members. The *memoriali di manufattori* listed those who had been assigned textiles to make up into clothing or embroidery. The *libri di debitori e creditori* listed the items that went out to individuals from the *Guardaroba delle Robe Fabbricate*, to which finished items of clothing were consigned and distributed.

¹⁰ See chapter one, note 97.

were given a white satin dress each, decorated with gold fringe (230 *braccia* were purchased for this purpose). They were also provided with four *sottane* or petticoats, of silk taffeta striped with silver and lined with white floss silk. Finally, they were also provided with four short cloaks (*ferraioli*) with gold buttons *all'ungheresca* (toggles).¹¹ White cloth was very expensive, especially in the types of fabric which required a perfectly even colour such as satins and velvets, and satin itself was an expensive textile.¹² These particular ladies may have been given particularly elaborate clothes as they were left to represent the Duchess in Florence while she was away in Siena, but the evidence left by her accounts indicates that such clothing was not unusual - Giovanna habitually dressed her ladies in velvets, satins, silk, gold and silver tabby, and taffeta.¹³ When they do wear wool, it is most often black *rascia*, a precious type of woollen cloth used for mourning garb, as a more sober textile was required for such events.¹⁴ These textiles and those intended for other members of her staff all tended to be decorated with a variety of ornamental additions, ranging from gold and silver filé,¹⁵ to gold embroidery, gold fringe and satin pickadils,¹⁶ to gold or silk buttons (Figures 16, 17).¹⁷

¹¹ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1569, p. 305r. This cost 72.4 *lire*, so about 10 *scudi*. One *scudo* was more than a week's wages for an unskilled labourer in 1570, so we can begin to get a picture of the expense of these clothes.

¹² It is exceedingly rare for items of clothing from this period to survive, as textiles were constantly re-used and there was no clear differentiation between textiles for dress and textiles for furnishings. However, some examples do remain, most frequently items of liturgical dress. Figure 13 provides an example of a white satin chasuble, patterned with an extra weft thread of silver gilt. Figure 14 provides an example of men's white satin ensemble, made in England in the 1630s. While it is not possible to get a sense of the style of the ladies-in-waiting's dress from these examples, they do show the richness and elegance of the material.

¹³ Another example of the clothes Giovanna commissioned for her ladies is provided in ASF, GM 61, p. 18r: 'nove tutte di velluto di diversi colori con busto, baragoni e maniche tutte tagliate esfondate e sotto tocca doro et dargento, e davanti e da pie attorno una banda simile tagliata e sotto tocca etutto oro filato con oro e argento filato, secondo il coloro date per commissione di Sua Altezza alla signora Laura per consegnare alle dame a ciascheduna la sua...' (nine all of velvet of different colours with busts, decorative puffs (at the top of the sleeve) and sleeves all slashed and cut out and underneath fabric all of filé gold with gold and silver filé, according to the colour given by order of Her Highness to the lady Laura to hand out to the ladies-in-waiting, to each her own...). *Tocca* was a gauze-like material and is used in a similar fashion in the portrait of Giovanna's sister Eleonora as a baby (Figure 15).

¹⁴ See for example ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1571, p. 387; Ibid., Fascicolo dated 1572, p. 366 (on this occasion the clothing is specifically for mourning the death of the Queen of Poland, Giovanna's sister).

¹⁵ 'La serenissima gran principessa di toscana dedare per queste robe apie di ordine di Sua Altezza date a messer giovanni talenti quale disse servino per ledame e prima
Adi 6 decembre 1571

δ14.21 in Braccia 112 spinetta dargento filato fine disono servire per guarnire giuboni di raso per le dame a y 7 B10 l' δ daccordo – y 112 B 1 S 4...'. (On the 6th of December 1571, 14.21 ounces in 112 *braccia* of fine silver filé ribbon which they said was to be used for decorating the ladies' satin doublets at 7.10 *lire* per ounce as agreed – 112.1.4 *lire*). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1571, p. 375.

¹⁶ These were decorative strips of cloth applied to collars, cuffs or waists of clothing, or to strengthen areas that received most wear and tear. 'adj 2 di marzo 1568

Indeed, Orsi Landini and Niccoli point out that Giovanna was particularly keen on covering her clothes with large quantities of embroidery, and this appears to have extended to the clothing provided for her ladies. A good example is a gown commissioned for the marriage of one of Giovanna's ladies, Camilla Arrighi, in 1575. This was made of gold tabby, i.e. taffeta with an extra weft thread of gold running through it, with a leaf pattern in red silk,¹⁸ and decorated with 49 $\frac{3}{4}$ *braccia* (about 29 metres) of embroidery on pinkish-red satin, which weighed 39.21 ounces, and was made using different types of gold and silver (figure 18).¹⁹ The embroidery for Camilla's red gown, together with a similar one, also made for her wedding, of gold tabby with green silk, contained altogether c.14 ounces of fringe, worth 105 *lire*, or c.15 *scudi*.²⁰ All these clothes were provided at Giovanna's cost for wear during the year at court, for specific trips such as the one to Siena and for other court events, or for special occasions, such as the ladies' weddings. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to calculate from the receipts and the descriptions in the *Guardaroba* files how much Giovanna spent on an individual dress. In the *libri di vestiri* and other *Guardaroba* books the items of clothing are rarely accompanied by price, and in the receipts, entries are for quantities of textiles, without any mention, often, of the type of garment for which they were intended, or the intended recipient. This makes their analysis in relation to the clothing expenditure of other Medici Duchesses difficult.

La Serenissima Principessa di fiorenza de dare y cinquanta [?] sono per manifattura di braccia 50 di ricamo fatto in raso bianco pero filato con oro filato eripieno di frangiette doro servi per guarnitione di una vesta della sig.ra Laura – y 50

E per manifattura di numero 105 pistagne fatte in raso bianco servino per la sopradetta vesta a B.1.4 l'una monta – y 6.10' (The Most Serene Princess of Florence must give 50 *lire* [?] for the manufacture of 50 *braccia* of white satin embroidery woven with filè gold and with a gold fringe, for decorating a gown of the lady Laura – *lire* 50. And for the manufacture of 105 pickadils of white satin for the said gown at 1.4 *denari* each – which comes to 6.10 *lire*). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, p. 130.

¹⁷ 'E per 6 dozzine di bottoni di seta nera pedetti, y 2.8...' [i.e. Giovanni Talenti, and the doormen Rocco and Manno] (And for 6 dozen black silk buttons for the aforementioned, 2.8 *lire*). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1569, p. 302 r. 'E addi 6 di luglio per 54 bottoni doro dati per ordine di giovanni talenti per un vestito dun buffone a B3.4 luno – y 9...' (And on the 6th of July for 54 gold buttons given on the orders of Giovanni Talenti for a buffoon's outfit at 3.4 *denari* each – 9 *lire*). Ibid., p. 304.

¹⁸ 'Una vesta di teletta d'oro in seta rossa a opera delle fogliette con sua busto et baragoni doppi per la signora Camilla ariga dama maritata al cavaliere biffoli'. This cloth may have looked similar to that in figure 12, although it is likely that the red silk leaf pattern was smaller. The Italian word used in the extract is *fogliette* and smaller patterns were coming into fashion for dress fabrics.

¹⁹ The embroidery decoration was probably arranged in bands around the bottom of the dress, down the sides of the front, and on the *baragoni*, the tops of the sleeves (the gown – vesta – was always worn with a petticoat underneath). It may have looked similar to the embroidery on red satin in figure 18. For the possible style of the dress, see also figure 19.

²⁰ ASF, GM 89, p. 66v, 70r.

While some comparisons can and have been made between Giovanna and Eleonora de Toledo, indicating that the Habsburg Duchess invested more in clothing her ladies-in-waiting than her predecessor, the situation is more difficult with her successor Bianca. The documentation for the latter²¹ indicates that she too clothed her ladies in expensive textiles.²² But, because prices are often not supplied, or individual quantities set out for all parts of the item of clothing, it is difficult to calculate expenses and to compare specific amounts spent by the two Duchesses. It is only possible to suggest that both appear to have invested heavily in their ladies' clothing. Both had cogent reasons for doing so. Bianca had been Francesco's mistress for years prior to Giovanna's death, behaviour which provoked accusations of adultery and, after the death of her husband, lewd and dishonourable behaviour.²³ Moreover, although she was a noblewoman in her own right, she was far lower in status than the Habsburg Archduchess. As a consequence, she may have wished to remind people of her new rank by dressing herself and rewarding her associates with expensive garments. Furthermore, by the time Francesco took over the government of the Duchy, the Florentines were more accustomed to Medici rule and the Duke's court grew steadily larger and more extravagant than his father's.²⁴ We can therefore see the increase in expenditure on both the Duchesses' clothes and those of their ladies within the framework of a natural growth in the general splendour of the court around them. However, as I have suggested with Bianca, I would also propose that other factors played into the choices Giovanna made. First of all, she was relatively limited in her capacity to distribute largesse –she was not as financially solvent as her predecessor was, she was not involved in the administration of justice as was her sister Eleonora, nor did she own any land, or govern the duchy when her husband was away, as both her sisters did. With limited security, she faced considerable restrictions over her independence of action and control of both

²¹ This documentation only exists from her marriage to Francesco onwards. See, for example, ASF, GM 104, which charts clothing made for the Duchess and members of her court from 1580 onwards. Bianca Cappello's personal clothing has been discussed in greater detail in Anna Elvira Tomasino, 'Fasti granducali nella guardaroba di Bianca Cappello', in *Apparir con stile*, ed. by Isabella Bigazzi (Florence: Edifir - Edizioni Firenze, 2007), pp. 69-92.

²² An entry in ASF, GM 104, lists pairs of white, red, gold and green damask robes made up for Bianca's nine ladies-in-waiting on p. 45, which were embellished with gold and silver *spinetta*.

²³ Bastiano Arditi gives a negative account of Bianca and her behaviour: Bastiano Arditi, *Diario di Firenze e di altre parti della cristianità (1574-1579)*, ed. by Roberto Cantagalli (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 1970), p. 9.

²⁴ Marcello Fantoni points out the Venetian ambassadors' comment that Francesco is served 'con l'istessa maniera delli principi piu' grandi'. Fantoni, *La corte del granduca*, p. 36. However, he also points out that Ferdinand's court was far larger and more splendid, and Francesco remained cautious in his attitude to public displays of personal wealth, as I will discuss further on.

the people and objects in her court. As a consequence dress offered an important outlet for making connections (both social and financial) and display. Finally, Giovanna, perhaps covertly at first, but certainly openly from 1572 onwards, was forced to compete for attention and for status with Bianca. This may also have driven her to invest in precious clothing and promote her *liberalitas* in a bid to retain loyalty and service. As Sharon Kettering points out, largesse brought social prestige because it indicated rank, demonstrated wealth or the ability to give, and good character or the willingness to give.²⁵

The ladies' presence in the entourage of the Duchess was a key method of demonstrating her power and status in a highly direct and visible way. There is evidence to show that Giovanna often dressed her ladies in waiting in identical clothing. This would have meant that she would have been surrounded by blocks of colour – effectively liveries, and powerful visible expressions of the number of people in her service.²⁶ Part of the ladies' duties was to demonstrate their subordination to the Duchess. By wearing the clothes given to them by Giovanna, they made their patronage ties to her visible. Indeed the significance of dress as a mark of belonging and being part of the court is exemplified by the fact that being deprived of one's livery meant being expelled from court and was a punishment of last resort for infractions.²⁷

However, Giovanna also had to keep to the rules governing rank and appropriateness in dress. Giovanni della Casa, in his *Galateo overo de' costumi*, first published in 1558, observed that:

Each individual must dress according to his condition and his age...man must adapt his dress to the style of the other citizens and take on their customs...²⁸

This was as true at court as it was in the rest of the city. Patronage had to be appropriate in order to be effective – if she had dressed the entirety of her staff in the clothes she

²⁵ Kettering, 'Gift-Giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', (p. 138).

²⁶ An example taken from the accounts is as follows: 'E addi 16 di marzo per braccia 27 di nastro di filaticcio bianco daorlare levo maestro austino disse servire per 9 sottane di drappo d'argento eseta turchina per le signore dame'. (27 *braccia* of white floss silk for hemming, taken by Master Agostino who said it was needed for 9 petticoats of silver cloth and turquoise silk for the ladies-in-waiting). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1569, p. 305r. Queen Elizabeth I also dressed her ladies in identical clothing, at her own expense. See Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd* (Leeds: W.S. Maney & Son Ltd, 1988), p. 100.

²⁷ Marcello Fantoni, 'L'abito, le regole e la trasgressione. Usi e simbologie delle livree alla corte Medicea', in *Le trame della moda*, ed. by Anna Giulia Cavagna and Grazietta Butazzi (Rome: Bulzoni, 1995) (p. 99).

²⁸ Giovanni della Casa, *Galateo*, ed. by Giorgio Manganelli and Claudio Milanini (Milan: Rizzoli Editore, 1977), p. 69. Similar sentiments about adapting to local custom and dressing appropriately to one's condition and rank are repeated several times in this work.

chose for her ladies-in-waiting, then the key messages regarding hierarchy and status implicit in the use of different colours and textiles would have been lost. Giovanna may have wished to dress her courtiers as richly as possible but she could not afford to be indiscriminate. The ladies-in-waiting occupied a very high position in the household hierarchy. That is why positions were so sought after, as the letters from families either requesting or thanking Giovanna for arranging a position for their young female relative attest.²⁹ Thus the kitchen assistant, Guglielmo is assigned an outfit made out of *perpignano* cloth, a relatively cheap, widely used woollen jersey cloth, without any additional decoration.³⁰ The ladies in waiting's servants also often wear *perpignano* cloth,³¹ although in both cases mentioned here, the cloth is described as fine. Again this is an indication that although servants and therefore of relatively low status, the fact that their employer is of such high status means that they cannot be seen to bring dishonour on them by dressing in untended or poor clothing. It is instead the rule to provide them with simple but good quality cloth. In order to ensure, furthermore, that they do not bring shame on their patron by their clothing, it is regularly changed, and they have access to both an everyday and a good set.³²

Giovanna's accounts show that she was in charge of providing and paying for clothing, not just for her ladies-in-waiting, but for many of her servants. Most of her male servants were dressed in black. But the women wore a variety of colours and were often allocated clothing that included turquoise, in the embroidery, or the buttons, or the

²⁹ See for example, ASF, MdP 5923, pp. 188, 308.

³⁰ 'e addi 9 di maggio levo messer giovanni talenti, dise servire per ghuglielmo garzone in cucina, braccia 7 di perpignano nero di guado fine servi per cappa e calzoni per detto a y 5 per braccio – y35...' (and on the 9th of May Giovanni Talenti took 7 *braccia* of fine black perpignan cloth at 5 *lire* per *braccio*, which he said were needed for a cloak and breeches for Guglielmo the kitchen boy). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 225r.

³¹ 'e adi 19 di luglio levo messer giovanni disse per vestire landriana serva delle dame braccia xi ½ di perpignano nero finissimo a y 5 il braccio daccordo – y 57.10...' (and on the 19th of July Sir Giovanni [Talent] took 11 ½ *braccia* of very fine perpignan cloth to dress Andriana, the ladies in waiting's servant at *lire* 5 per *braccio* agreed – *lire* 57.10). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 225v.

³² 'Conto 2.o del vestito doppio bianco per le festi, e per il giorno del lavoro...Conto di buricco, calze, e giubbone e cappa e altro per vestire Gianfederigho Vattig.ti[?] in nella pasqua passata...' ('2nd bill for the double white outfit for feast days and for work days...Bill for the overgarment, hose, doublet, cloak and more for clothing Gianfederigho Vattig.ti last Easter'). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1569, p. 319r. Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, p. 214, states that Duchess wanted to ensure that her confessor, Padre Elderan, dressed well, and furnished him with *rascia*, much finer than the *saia perugina* they wore in Rome. Again this indicates the Duchess' desire to ensure that those associated with her reflected the dignity of her state and the fact that this did not go unnoticed can be seen as a mark of her success, although it may also reflect the anxiety the Jesuits felt at the association of their members with women and the worldly environment of the court.

sleeves.³³ The inclusion of this colour may have been due only to its increasing popularity,³⁴ but it is likely that its preferment was also due to the fact that it was the Duke Francesco's livery colour. Giovanna may have chosen to adopt turquoise either as an attempt at flattering her husband, or to appropriate some of his authority by making their ties visible on her household's clothing.

As well as accounts detailing the provision of identical or similar clothing for the ladies in waiting, individual items also appear, seemingly above and beyond these, which can be interpreted as extra gifts. A certain 'Signora Laura', for example was the frequent recipient of clothing, ivory thimbles, gold embroidery and other items, as was her daughter, who received a dress and a pair of shoes and a pair of *pianelle*.³⁵ Although Laura's daughter was still only a child, the allocation of clothing to her demonstrates how support could potentially be passed down in the recipient's family, in a continuous cycle of patronage and service.³⁶ This evidently also occurs in Ferrara, as Barbara's will illustrates. Here the Duchess of Ferrara leaves instructions for two silver vases and two *tazze* to be given to the Lady Leonarda Estense Bentivoglia, and a dress to her daughter, the Lady Margherita, presumably a married woman and also in her service, from the appellation 'Signora' and her inclusion amongst the Italian 'dame'.³⁷ These were the

³³ 'Sua Alteza dedare addi 4 di settenbre per dj 7 di seta turchina cioe orsoio disse servire pericami delle veste delle signore dame...y 15.6'. (Her Highness must give on 4th September for 7 ounces of turquoise silk, or rather silk organza which she said was needed for embroidering the gowns of the ladies-in-waiting). ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1569, p. 305r.

³⁴ Landini and Niccoli state that shades of blue, violet and green slowly made their way into Eleonora de Toledo's wardrobe in the second half of the 1550s. Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, p. 28.

³⁵ All information contained in ASF, GM 101. These gifts showed special favour, but they were also practical. There is evidence to support the idea that court ladies were employed in needlework of various kinds. Giuseppe Gorzoni describes Eleonora's efforts and those of her ladies to sew linens for the Jesuit priests (*Istoria del collegio di Mantova*, ed. by Bilotto and Rurale, p. 70), and the Medici ambassador's words, describing Giovanna's gift of various textiles to the Pope: 's'erano fatte lavorare da Sua Altezza' suggests that she may have directly supervised their decoration by her ladies (see chapter six, note 49).

³⁶ The household of Anne of Austria at the seventeenth-century French court demonstrates the networks of patronage that could envelop the whole family: out of the total group of 129 identifiable women and girls in Anne's household, 44, or 34.1 percent, were related to other ladies and maids of honour who had served or were serving her – whether mothers and daughters, aunts and nieces, sisters, or even a grandmother and granddaughter. Ruth Kleinman, 'Social Dynamics at the French Court: The Household of Anne of Austria', *French Historical Studies*, 16.3 (1990), (p. 534).

³⁷ See Appendix 2. Interestingly, although both Barbara and Eleonora leave their relatives items of jewellery or reliquaries – Barbara leaves her sister Eleonora a reliquary and her sister-in-law a ring, while Eleonora left rings and precious gems to her children and daughter-in-law – Barbara leaves her clothes only to members of her household. This can be paralleled with the choices made by Cicely Duchess of York in her will. Kathleen Ashley points out that the Duchess left almost all her outfits not to relatives but to people in her social network. I would suggest that this included members of her household. Ashley argues that lavish and fashionable clothing exhibits the testator's social place and demonstrates, even in the act of exiting the world, one's power of largesse – of gifting to maintain position as a social leader. Ashley, 'Material and Symbolic Gift Giving' (p. 144). This indicates that although we have no evidence to show that Barbara attempted to extend patronage through clothing during her life, she has left evidence

ways, therefore, in which the Florentine Duchess attempted to bind the members of her household to her, to delineate the relationships she held with them, and to demonstrate to those around her the rank and position she held at court.

Clothing the Duchess

[He must] decide what kind of person he wishes to appear, and... dress accordingly, and make sure his clothing makes him generally held as such, even by those who do not hear him talk nor witness his actions.³⁸

So far I have examined the female consort's gift-giving and the policies she adopted in acquiring and employing particular goods as a means of creating networks of contacts, instilling loyalty amongst courtiers and highlighting her own position and status. Now I will focus more closely on her use of clothing to construct images of identity and loyalty.

During the early modern period, clothes served as identity markers, singling the wearer out by gender, age, relationship (i.e. widowed, maid, newly married etc.) and class.³⁹ As Sandra Cavallo has shown, it formed a key part of the narrow range of objects owned, as well as used, by women. As a consequence it served an essential communicative function; what you wore indicated who you were.⁴⁰ It can be argued that clothing operates in the same way as language, passing along messages from one person to another.⁴¹ However, it is important to keep in mind that clothing is not the same as language. While it shares some of its characteristics, it has intrinsic peculiarities— in some ways it is more adept at passing on messages, and in others it is liable to fail. Grant McCracken has addressed the question of the differences between clothing and language as mediums for the transferral of messages between people. He has pointed out, using examples drawn from anthropological studies, such as Bogatyrev's 1971

that she did do so in death; and the lack of any clothing bequests in Eleonora's will may add to the evidence that suggests she was less interested in the use of clothing as a means of maintaining her position in Mantua.

³⁸ 'deliberar ciò che vol parere, e...della medesima vestirsi, e far che gli abiti lo aiutino ad esser tenuto per tale ancor da quelli che non l'odono parlare, nè veggono far operazione alcuna'. Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, ed. by Carlo Cordié (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), Book II, XXVII.

³⁹ Cesare Vecellio's costume book frequently separates out different women's costumes according to their married, unmarried or widowed status, as well as their social class. See Cesare Vecellio, *De gli habiti antichi, et moderni et diverse parti del mondo libri due, fatti da C.V. e con discorsi da lui dichiarati* (Venice, 1590).

⁴⁰ Ago, 'Il linguaggio del corpo' (p. 120).

⁴¹ For a discussion of theoretical perspectives on clothing and fashion, and dress as communication, see Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp. 66-71, 87, 91.

study of Moravian folk costume, that clothing can serve a vital role within human communities in revealing to those within the group, who are able to interpret the signs, the basic co-ordinates into which they have arranged their cultural world, such as rank, sex, marital status and occupation.⁴² He points out that clothing is very good at repeating and reinforcing messages, and therefore strengthening the cultural categories into which a society is divided. However, he also affirms that clothing must follow rigid rules itself if it wants to be interpretable – it is difficult for clothing as a language to transform ideas, as it has far fewer options for expression than a language of words. Therefore, too much innovation in dress can result in misinterpretation or lack of comprehension, rather than in the reception of a new idea or belief.⁴³

The idea of clothing as language and the possibilities for expression inherent within it appears to have been recognised as an issue by early modern society, judging from the broad range of instructive texts and manuals on appropriate behaviour that entered the market and taught people to make the right clothing choices and to decode the sartorial choices of their fellow men. I have already mentioned Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo*. His is a good example of this kind of text and he was a contemporary of Giovanna's.⁴⁴ His words reflect the anxiety the dukes demonstrated and their interest in discussing and editing the type of clothing their wives adopted in order to regulate the messages that they sent out to the surrounding community. One of the principal reasons for these discussions was the problem of the conflicting identity the bride embodied. She might be a welcome ally, but she was also a representative of a foreign, perhaps competing or even inimical family. As a consequence it was considered imperative for the consort to be seen to openly abandon her previous state and embrace her new one, and this could and did extend to particular requirements regarding dress and accessories. In the case of Giovanna's sister, Eleonora, promised to Guglielmo Gonzaga, the Duke's envoy received assurances from Eleonora that she would wear Mantuan headwear as soon as she arrived,⁴⁵ while the consort that preceded Barbara in Ferrara, Renée of France, told the Ferrarese ambassador Prosperi that she wished to learn the Italian language as soon as possible, and to dress 'al modo di là' (i.e. in the Ferrarese fashion).⁴⁶ This demonstrates that dress was seen as an essential way of manifesting

⁴² McCracken, 'Clothing as Language' (p. 105).

⁴³ Ibid. (p. 120).

⁴⁴ See note 28.

⁴⁵ ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo II, p. 171.

⁴⁶ Gorris, 'D'un chateau à l'autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara' (p. 140).

one's new loyalties and indeed visualising one's new identity. The female consort may have had control over the clothing she commissioned, but she could still face requests and interference from her husband, and ducal intervention did not necessarily stop with the wedding. According to Eleonora's biographer, Antonio Folcario:

[Eleonora] always dressed modestly...having heard indirectly but surely that her husband would be pleased if she didn't wear, even under her robes, coloured clothing, nor made use of jewellery, she immediately removed from her neck a cross she wore with five rubies, and a crimson satin petticoat, with a single gold trim, which alone remained to her of the very many, both rich and precious, that she used to have...As a widow...she never wore silk. During mourning, having to wear, in order to honour her dead husband, a gown with a long train, she said every day felt like a hundred before she could cut it off, as she did not like these vanities.⁴⁷

Although this story may be apocryphal – intended to demonstrate the Duchess' pious disregard for the trappings of wealth and bodily vanity, as well as her obedience to the Duke – it does indicate that an anecdote about a husband attempting to intervene in the way a wife dressed would be considered the norm.

However, Possevino's repeated assertions about her disregard for rich clothing also indicate that Eleonora Gonzaga was using her clothing to make public points:

She would not dress in new clothes many times a year, especially after she had been widowed, rather, so I have heard, some years passed when she spent barely a couple of *scudi* on her dress.⁴⁸

This is supported by her portrayal in the family portrait commissioned from Rubens, where she presents a strong contrast in her plain black clothing to the gold and white figure of the young Duchess Eleonora de' Medici Gonzaga (figure 20). As I discussed in chapter two, Eleonora already had access to official mechanisms for patronage and power; she had a stable and amicable relationship with her husband and her husband's family; she had provided a male heir and had no obvious rival to her authority. With her

⁴⁷ '[Eleonora] vestì in ogni tempo modestamente... havendo inteso per via indiretta, ma certa, che al Signor suo consorte sarebbe stato di sodisfazione che non vestisse, ne pure sotto panni, veste alcuna di colore, ne usasse gioie, subito si levò dal collo una crocetta che portava con cinque rubini e una sottana di raso cremisino con una sola trina d'oro, che sola le era restata di tante e tante sì ricche e pretiose, che per innanti haveva. ...Vedova ...non portò mai veste di seta. Nel tempo del duolo, bisognandole portare per honor del Signor suo marito defonto, la veste colla coda lunga alla grande, le pareva un giorno cento che finisse, per poterla far tagliare, dicendo, che le dispiacevano queste vanità'. Folcario, *Vita della serenissima Eleonora*, p. 104.

⁴⁸ 'Non si vestiva di nuovo altrimenti piu volte l'anno, massime doppo ch'era rimasta vedova, anzi che passava tal'anno, per quanto mi vien riferito, che a' pena spendeva un paio di scudi pel suo vestire'. Ibid., p. 108.

dowry in place, in possession of a small amount of land and jurisdiction within the duchy in matters of justice, and, importantly, with a formal residence of her own in the palace at Porto, Eleonora did not have to rely on more indirect means, such as dress, to reinforce her status. Instead, like her uncle the Emperor Maximilian who had worn and promoted an austere and plain dress, she was able to exchange rich clothing for vestments that suggested piety, carrying a message of humility and religiosity. Thus, not only do we have stories of her lack of interest in rich and expensive clothing, we also have a story chronicled by both Folcario and the Jesuit Father Giuseppe Gorzoni which details her selling her jewels and clothing to pay for the foundation of the Jesuit College in Mantua.⁴⁹

However, not all female consorts had these choices. Some, like Giovanna, had fewer avenues of patronage open to them and so chose to use dress to focus more directly on the overt display of rank and status. I have already compared Giovanna's allocation of dress to her ladies with that of her predecessor Eleonora de Toledo. However I will now focus more closely on the differences the two Duchesses displayed in their approach to their own clothing. Eleonora kept within the limits stipulated by Cosimo in his sumptuary laws for the amounts of textile to be used in making dresses, even though she was not required to do so. Furthermore, she appears to have adopted a relatively sober mode of dress at court; if we look at Appendix 4, which charts the colours of her clothing, the highest percentage of her clothing is red, but this is swiftly followed by grey and brown, which are markedly less expensive colours.⁵⁰ If we look at Giovanna's clothes however, such colours are very rare: one *roba* in velvet, and one *roba* and one *sottana* in damask are made for her use in *bigio*, and another *roba* and *sottana* combination is described as being made of dove-grey satin, but there is no mention of brown at all. Instead, more than half her wardrobe is made up of white and black clothing.

White was a colour particularly associated with chastity and purity. The author of the most widely read treatise of the sixteenth century on colours and their meaning: Sicillo, Alphonso V of Aragon's herald, highlighted white's particular significance in a discussion of a woman's 'moral dress':

The snow-white chemise signifies her honesty, which must be spotless without any blemish of vice. She must then have a skirt of white damask to show she is chaste and pure and far

⁴⁹ See Ibid., p. 142; *Istoria del collegio di Mantova*, ed. by Bilotto and Rurale, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, pp. 26-27.

removed from any manner of lust, as white may not tolerate any stain or embellishment upon it.⁵¹

While the meanings associated with certain colours could shift and by the mid-sixteenth century, colour symbolism was no longer strictly observed,⁵² white did retain consistent symbolic value and Giovanna may have favoured this colour in order to benefit from its general associations. The Duchess' relationship with Francesco was troubled and grew increasingly difficult during the later years of her life in Florence. By wearing white, she could highlight her own purity and innocence in the face of the Duke's philandering with Bianca, and also protect herself from any accusations of unchastity that might have been employed to remove her, or otherwise silence her complaints about her husband. However, white was also a costly shade to achieve and it was associated with glory and triumph.⁵³ It is clear from her wardrobe that Giovanna took care to ensure that she stood out at court – not only did she abandon the modest dyes of brown and grey, her dresses were often covered in gold embroidery, braids, fringes and other decorative effects.⁵⁴ She appears to have used large amounts of gold and silver wire, gold and silver filé, gold and silver purle and gold and silver loops for decorating the textiles she bought.⁵⁵ While she may have wished to highlight her purity, she chose not to do so at the expense of her dignity.

⁵¹ 'la camisa candidissima che significhi l'honestà sua, che deve essere candida senz'alcuna macchia di vicio. Deve poi haver la sottana di damasco bianco per dar ad intender che la deve essere casta e pura e lontana da ogni maniera di lussuria, non sopportandi il bianco sopra di sè alcuna macchia o fregio'. *Silk and Colour*, ed. by Chiara Buss (Milan: Ratti S.p.A., 1997), p. 16. Ludovico Dolce, the author of another treatise on colour: *Dialogo di M. Ludovico Dolce nel quale si ragiona della qualità diversità e proprietà dei colori*, published in Venice in 1565, also wrote of white: 'white signified purity of heart, because it is not a colour, nor contaminated by another colour'. *Ibid.*, p. 193, note 49.

⁵² Elizabeth Currie, 'The Fashions of the Florentine Court: Wearing, Buying and Making Clothes, 1560-1620' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2004), pp. 39-40.

⁵³ Venetian sources indicate that noblewomen adopted this colour for public ceremonies and celebrations. It was considered particularly suitable for royal entrances and indeed, the artist Antonio Vassilacchi depicted Caterina Cornaro, in her incarnation as the Queen of Cyprus, arriving in Venice in shining white, *Silk and Colour*, ed. by Buss, pp. 16, 40. The association of white with triumph will be further discussed in relation to Giovanna's pilgrimage to Loreto in 1573.

⁵⁴ Only two portraits have survived of Giovanna, although several versions of these portraits exist. The portrait of Giovanna and her son is posthumous, but it is highly likely that she is wearing items from her own wardrobe. Both portraits, figures 19 and 21, demonstrate the Duchess' interest in expensive, precious textiles and trimmings.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Currie has discussed the slow change from heavy expensive brocades to lighter, less expensive textiles such as taffetas, which took place during the period of time from Eleonora to Giovanna's reign, Currie, 'The Fashions of the Florentine Court' (pp. 132-34). This fashion is evident in Giovanna's accounts, as there is a marked predisposition towards lighter materials. However, although one might use this evidence to argue that Giovanna was avoiding making statements about status by purchasing less impressive textiles, the amounts of embroidery and gold and silver thread that covered these clothes indicates that Giovanna was making an effort to display her status, despite the vagaries of fashion. Orsi Landini points out Giovanna's predilection for gold embroidery, Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, p. 42. For examples of the clothing Giovanna wore, see Appendix 4.

Alongside white clothing, Giovanna's *Guardaroba* reveals a very high percentage of black.⁵⁶ A large part of this can in turn be designated as mourning clothing,⁵⁷ and Giovanna's frequent adoption of this dress is in itself significant. Black mourning garb was a prerogative of the aristocracy, to the extent that sumptuary laws attempted to limit its use to the nobility.⁵⁸ Giovanna's insistence on dressing both herself and her ladies in mourning with such frequency drove her husband in one instance to complain that she 'would not need to do more if he himself had died'.⁵⁹ Giovanna may therefore have worn mourning so often to emphasize both her Christian devotion, in sharp contrast to her husband's lack of appropriate behaviour,⁶⁰ and her aristocratic status, but her employment of this particular colour on a frequent basis also enabled her to highlight her family connections. Black was a colour associated with aristocratic formality at both the Austrian and the Spanish courts and Giovanna's black dress, both in mourning and on other occasions could have particular implications.

Dress and Identity

Clothing was discussed not only in the letters of ambassadors and in biographies, it was also analysed in great detail by participants in events that took place at court. As the Duchess of Mantova's case seems to indicate, husbands and wives did not necessarily come into conflict over sartorial choices. However, if there were ambiguities or conflicts in relationships within the family, consorts could choose to use their relative independence over the commissioning of clothing combined with the strong cultural focus upon it as a locus of information, as a means of revealing internal issues, and signalling disagreement with family policies. A clear example of this is given by Renée of Ferrara who appeared at a court dance in 1530 dressed in the French manner, in strident contrast to the fashions adopted by the rest of the court and an act widely

⁵⁶ It is also present in Eleonora de Toledo's wardrobe, but not nearly to the same extent. See Appendix 4.

⁵⁷ Textiles that had a matt surface, such as wool, were preferred for mourning. Clothes made out of black wool twill (*rascia*) appear very frequently in Giovanna's wardrobe. The fact that they are sometimes specifically described as 'for mourning', and that *rascia* almost exclusively appears in her wardrobe in this specific colour indicates that when clothing in black *rascia* was ordered, it was for mourning purposes. See Elizabeth Currie, 'Textiles and Clothing', in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (London: V&A Publications, 2006) (p. 346).

⁵⁸ *Silk and Colour*, ed. by Buss, pp. 17, 52.

⁵⁹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 25 November 1576. At the time Giovanna was in mourning for her brother, the Emperor Maximilian II.

⁶⁰ The ambassador reports her complaints at Francesco's refusal to have her carriage draped in black, and highlights his negligence with respect to dressing his own household in mourning. Ibid.

interpreted as a reaction to her husband's failing loyalty towards France.⁶¹ As we shall see, Giovanna was never as bold as Renée in the political statements she incorporated into her clothing, perhaps because she was not supported as Renée was by an ample dowry and annuity received from her native country, and the birth of a male heir in 1533. However, I will argue that the Florentine Duchess did use style and colour not only to highlight her rank but also to express the ambiguity and occasional conflict she felt about her position at the Medici court.

This was apparent when she first arrived at the Florentine court in December 1565. A Bavarian courtier described her wearing both Italian and German attire interchangeably in the weeks following her wedding.⁶² This contrasts strongly with his description of Giovanna's sister Barbara, on his visit to her shortly afterwards in 1566: she wore a gown of blue and gold, with a red and gold over-gown in the Italian style as well as an Italian head-dress, which she also wore on the following days.⁶³ It is worth noting that Alfonso's own colours were blue and gold.⁶⁴ Together with the rest of her clothing it makes a convincing statement that Barbara was signalling her new allegiances to her visitors. We have no means of knowing exactly why Giovanna decided not to adopt Florentine fashion wholeheartedly, but she may have felt unwilling or at least ambiguous about her marriage to a relatively low-ranked noble family. This may have prompted her to show those present at the wedding and festivities that took place during the weeks that followed that she may have married into the Medici family, but she also belonged to a far higher and grander lineage. A few years later, in 1569, when one might have expected Giovanna to have settled into Florentine costume, there is still a hint of ambiguity displayed during the visit of her brother, the Archduke Charles of Austria. The visit is described by the Ferrarese ambassador to Florence, Rodolfo Conegrani:

⁶¹ Milano, 'Gli Estensi' (p. 72). Interestingly, after her imprisonment for her Calvinist tendencies and the removal of key members of her court, Renée is described in the 1550s as dressed as a widow, with a widow's cap, and a high-collared black robe, perhaps another visible signal both of her attitude to her husband, but also her official retreat from the worldliness of politics. Gorris, 'D'un chateau à l'autre: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara' (p. 167).

⁶² 'the day after her entry Giovanna wore a gold dress...cut in the German manner...On the morning of the 19 December she wore an under-dress...and over this a silver dress... in the Italian fashion...'. Further changes take place on the following days. This extract is taken from Katritzky, 'The Florentine Entrata', (p. 156).

⁶³ Maximilian Prokop von Freyberg, *Sammlung historischer Schriften und Urkunden* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: J.G. Gotta, 1834), IV, p. 349.

⁶⁴ Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara*, p. 14.

Her Highness [Giovanna] awaited him...with the Lady Isabella [her sister-in-law] and 50 gentlewomen of the foremost in the city, all dressed in cloth of gold and silk and jewelled embroidery, and Her Highness wore a petticoat of black velvet so completely embroidered with gold and silver relief work that you could only just see the velvet, and on top of that a gown which I think was made of white silk cloth and gold, with a band of embroidery around it, with innumerable jewels on her head and pearls around her neck; and the Lady Isabella dressed all in white and gold with embroideries and innumerable jewels and beautiful pearls around her neck.⁶⁵

This description gives an indication of the pomp with which the imperial guest was received, and contrasts with the description the ambassador then provides of the two male members of the Medici family. Because of Florence's recent republican history Cosimo had been careful to avoid signs of personal ostentation in his dress or in his lifestyle; he dressed soberly and in this he appears to have been followed by his son. On this occasion, Conegrani reported:

the Duke [*Cosimo*] and the Prince [*Francesco*] were dressed in their everyday clothes, the Duke with a hooded cape covered with black fabric, the Prince with a short damask cloak.⁶⁶

Such choices suggest that the male members of the Medici family were careful not to stand out too conspicuously from their fellow citizens. However, it is also likely that their clothing lacked splendour because of new trends in fashion and the particular identity of the visitor. Male dress in the sixteenth century witnessed a significant cultural shift away from the bright colours and magnificent decoration that had characterized clothing in the fifteenth century. In Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, preference is expressed for black and sober clothing, although with the caveat that brighter, more elaborate dress is suitable for festivities and special occasions. Accordingly, on a royal visit, one might expect the Medici Dukes to honour their guest by dressing in bright and elaborate clothing, however, their choice of sober, 'everyday' dress may be understood by reference to an anecdote recounted by the Italian biographer, Paolo Giovio, according to whom the Marquis of Pescara, who had fought on the victorious Spanish side, visited the defeated King of France, Francis I:

Not dressed in gold and velvet like the others...but, through the singular modesty of his soul, in a tunic of black cloth...to demonstrate his true grief and compassion for the fate of his royal state.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ See Appendix 3, letter dated 27 April 1569.

⁶⁶ See Appendix 3, letter dated 27 April 1569.

The Archduke was the Emperor's brother, of significantly higher social standing than the Medici. I would suggest that Cosimo and Francesco were following the Marquis' example by humbling themselves and visualising the social distance that separated them from their imperial guest, while also donning the black garb (*mocaiardo nero*) that proclaimed their virtue and identity as gentlemen in the age of the Habsburg Empire.⁶⁸

Women, however, were expected to dress more grandly than the men⁶⁹ and Giovanna's dress and that of the other ladies conforms to this expectation, but I wish to focus specifically on the clothes the Duchess is described as wearing. The ambassador noted that her petticoat was of black velvet. As we have seen, the colour black had been made popular by the Habsburg Emperor Charles V, and it was particularly associated with the Spanish and Austrian courts. Giovanna may have wished to stand out from her female companions by means of the colour of her dress, but her choice of this colour in particular may have been prompted by her desire to visually stress her links to the Habsburg family.⁷⁰ As I have shown black (and white) appears very regularly in Giovanna's wardrobe, and black and white are the colours most frequently worn in portraits of Habsburg women like Giovanna's nieces, Maria of Bavaria and Anne of Austria, and her sister-in-law, and cousin, Maria of Spain (see figures 22-24).⁷¹ Giovanna may have chosen this combination of colours on this occasion in order to visually stress her links to the Habsburg family. It is worth noting that the Bavarian courtier who described Giovanna's clothes in his diary in 1565 wrote that on the 25th of December 'she dressed in the German fashion, wearing a black velvet dress edged with gold thread'.⁷²

As well as signalling her links to the Habsburg family through her choice of colour, Giovanna also made ample use of gold and silver embroidered decoration. In doing so, she appears to have been following in her mother's footsteps – Anna Jagiello also demonstrated a marked preference for gold decoration on the velvets and taffetas

⁶⁷ 'non vestito di velluto e d'oro come gli altri...ma per singolar modestia d'animo in saio di panno nero...per mostrare ancora non finto dolore d'aver compassione alla sorte della condizion reale'. Amedeo Quondam, *Tutti i colori del nero: moda e cultura del gentiluomo nel Rinascimento* (Vicenza: Angelo Colla Editore, 2007), pp. 45, 72.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 28-33, 58-59.

⁶⁹ It was their role to reveal the family's wealth and status through their clothes.

⁷⁰ Black was fashionable for Florentine men to wear but had only recently begun to be included in female dress. Eleonora de Toledo, had effectively banned it from her court apart for certain ceremonial occasions and in times of mourning and it doesn't appear at all in the wardrobe of Giovanna's contemporary, Cosimo's young wife, Camilla Martelli. Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, pp. 28, 238-39.

⁷¹ For a useful collection of Habsburg portraits online, see: www.hapsburg.net/portraits/. These portraits show that black was highly favoured for women as well as men.

⁷² Katritzky, 'The Florentine Entrata', (p. 156).

she favoured as fabrics.⁷³ By covering her clothing in such decoration, the Florentine Duchess may therefore have been placing yet further visual emphasis to her familial connections. However, her use of gold and silver embroidery also allowed her to make a public point about her prestige and rank – she, unlike her husband, was also a daughter and sister of emperors. The description of the embroidery (a petticoat of black velvet so completely embroidered with gold and silver relief work that you could only just see the velvet) seems to hint at a truly spectacular sight – it provides an example of the visual impact of Giovanna's clothes, and her impressive financial investment in creating a grand image on the court stage.

Nevertheless, despite her adoption of Habsburg colours, the outfit of overgown and petticoat Giovanna chose to wear was a style of dress common in Florence, and the portraits that survive of her, as well as her accounts, indicate that she generally adopted this style. So, for example, while the 1564 Francesco Terzio portrait (which portrays her prior to her arrival in Florence) shows Giovanna with a collar that reaches up to her chin, with hair covering her ears in the German fashion, and wearing a single gown, with no overgown (figure 2), her 1586 posthumous portrait shows her wearing a petticoat and an overgown and a collar that is closed up to the neck but does not rise up to the chin, and a hairstyle that does not cover the ears, as does the smaller half bust portrait of her by Alessandro Allori and his workshop, also painted after her arrival in Florence (figures 19, 21). Giovanna was not, therefore, adopting a completely different style of dress from the other Florentine women, and the northern style of clothing she wore in the month following her wedding may have gradually disappeared. This may have in part been a consequence of those whom she had at her disposal in the creation of her garments: Giovanna was assigned the tailor who had tended to Eleonora de Toledo,⁷⁴ and her embroiderers were also part of the team who had worked for her predecessor. As a consequence, her suppliers were trained to make particular types of clothing. Since she did not have independent funding and could not afford to lose her allowance by overtly offending her husband, it may have been easier to adopt at least some aspects of Florentine dress. However, while Eleonora had adopted the low square neckline and the puffy sleeves popular in mid-sixteenth-century Florence,⁷⁵ Giovanna declined to make certain changes. Her portraiture indicates that she still favoured a high,

⁷³ Fichtner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 143.

⁷⁴ Maestro Agostino had been Eleonora's tailor and worked for Giovanna when she arrived in Florence. Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, p. 171.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

closed neckline that was influenced by more northern-European fashions, like Habsburg Duchesses and Queens elsewhere (Figures 22-24). The Duchess may have chosen to do so to highlight her Habsburg connections, but we can also see Giovanna's neckline in relation to her sister Eleonora's highlighting of her Christian identity. One of Bianca's biographers states that Francesco gave Giovanna a pearl necklace to wear around her modestly covered neck;⁷⁶ even if this story is apocryphal, it suggests that the high collar may have been publicly associated with pious, chaste values. Giovanna may have chosen to focus on this aspect of her clothing in order to ensure she had a ready defence of piety and chastity, a sphere of action considered appropriate for the female consort. Given that wives who were inconvenient or unwanted could be removed through accusations of adultery, this was also a sensible reputation to adopt.⁷⁷

This particular stylistic aspect was also significant as Bianca had always favoured a v-neck (figure 7). Giovanna may have wished to preserve this particular part of her northern-European style in order to create a visual distinction between herself and Bianca. This hypothesis is supported by another account, this time of the baptism of Giovanna's daughter Eleonora. In a letter by the Sienese jurist Girolamo Bargagli, dated March 1, 1568, he describes the women's clothing as follows:

All of the women went from their own homes to the palace in coaches, and none were seen going on foot. All of them had their dresses not only high-collared but closed, as Her Highness wishes them to be worn so. [They wore] garlands, almost all made with pearls, as they don't wear pearl necklaces anymore, as they wear beautiful and rich belts, many large buttons and aglets on the tops of the sleeves and the bust. Almost all wore white satin doublets, velvet gown open at the top and the bottom, mostly of *filetto d'oro* or brocade, sometimes with a farthingale, tightly fitted in black and with nice waists[?], but I did not see any beauties, and none of them had that attractiveness and grace that one desires in women.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Masi, *Bianca Cappello*, p. 73.

⁷⁷ The Ferrarese ambassador, Cortile, reported that Giovanna had voiced this anxiety to him, saying that she feared that Francesco might accuse her of adultery in order to get rid of her. See Appendix 3, letter dated 12 September 1576.

⁷⁸ 'Le donne da casa loro a palazzo andarono tutte in cocchio, nè fu veduto andarne alcuna a piedi. Tutte havevano il vestire non solamente accollato ma chiuso, che così vuol che si porti Sua Altezza. Attrecciatoio [perhaps similar to *intrecciatoio* = hair net/garland] quasi tutti di perle, poiche i vezzi non li portan più per quel vestire gran belle e ricche cintole, molti gran bottoni e puntali ali bradoni [perhaps *brodone*=decorative elements covering the tops of the sleeves where they join the bust] et ai busti, quasi tutte in giubbonetto di raso bianco, vesta di velluto aperto sopra e sotto la maggior parte o di filetto d'oro o di broccato, con talor faldiglia, attillate in nero e belle vite, ma non mi parve veder bellezze, e manca a tutte quell'attrattivo e gratioso che si desidera nele donne.' Florindo Cerreta, 'The Entertainments for the

Here, Giovanna was visibly imposing her own authority on her citizens: ‘as Her Highness wishes them to be worn so’. Her imposition of her own style on Florentine women may be seen as an attempt to assert her position at the top of the social hierarchy. Although Bargagli describes these women as going to the palace by coach and therefore removing themselves from sight, in a way that might seem as protective of their reputation as their adoption of chaste, high-necked collars, they also appear to have participated in the procession to San Giovanni for the baptism. This would have ensured that their attire would have been visible to the wider Florentine populace as well as the Medici court. It is also worth remarking that Bargagli describes them as wearing white doublets and black velvet gowns, an inversion of the black velvet petticoat and white overgown that Giovanna wore to meet her brother the Archduke Charles. Attempts to decipher whether a particular fashion is imposed from above or popularised from below can be highly problematic, but I would suggest that the marked predominance of black and white in Giovanna’s wardrobe may indicate that on this occasion the ladies in question chose to adopt particular colours as well as a particular style in overt homage to the Duchess. Giovanna’s attempt to ensure that Florentine noblewomen followed her style of dress can be read as a demonstration to those who might need favours that she was able to wield influence and to ensure obedience to her wishes. She, not her rival, was the woman they should be turning to for help and with expressions of loyalty. However, despite the Florentine ladies’ apparent willingness to cooperate with Giovanna upon the occasion of her daughter’s baptism, they do not seem to have adopted her dress style on a regular basis. If we look at figures 25 to 27 we can see that there appears to have been a marked preference for displaying the open v-neck, with decorative frills or lace that Bianca favoured.

Giovanna may have preferred to use clothes rather than words as her medium in her conflicts with the Medici as, in Grant McCracken’s words: ‘the inconspicuousness of the messages of material culture also permit them to carry meanings that could not be put more explicitly without the danger of controversy, protest or refusal’.⁷⁹ By manoeuvring through dress, as I have shown, Giovanna could deflect criticism, avoid making too overt or dangerous statements and, in this case, argue that she was merely expressing her piety and trying to reform the people of her duchy. The adoption of such

Baptism of Eleonora de Medici in 1568 and a Letter by Girolamo Bargagli, *Italica*, 59.4 (1982), 284-95, (p. 291).

⁷⁹ McCracken, 'Clothing as Language' (p. 121).

a strategy is effectively visible in the clothing used during another episode, this time involving the Duchess' pilgrimage to Loreto. This trip took place in Spring 1573, a year after the letters mediating the open conflict between Giovanna and Francesco were sent by Grand Duke Cosimo, and shortly before the problems that arose with the marriage of the Baron von Sprinzenstein.⁸⁰ It is within the context of the tensions that characterise these years that Giovanna's clothing and that of her courtiers should be interpreted.

Female consorts did not usually travel a great deal, as they had no military or official role.⁸¹ However, because they were expected to undertake an unofficial role as examples of religious devotion, it was considered acceptable for them to go on pilgrimages. The Duchess made her decision to go to Loreto in order to pray to the Virgin to grant her a son. One of Giovanna's major problems throughout her life in Florence was her inability to provide Francesco with a male heir. But this trip can be read as much more than a religious pilgrimage; it can be viewed as an attempt by Giovanna to highlight her own prestige, the ambiguity of her feelings towards her husband and his family, and her links with the powerful Habsburg clan.

Marian worship was an essential aspect of the religious devotions of the Austrian House of Habsburg,⁸² and the Casa Santa of Loreto was a site particularly associated with the Virgin.⁸³ In 1597 the Jesuit priest Orazio Torsellino published a history of the House of Loreto which detailed the important people who had visited it and the gifts they had left or sent. One of the people listed is Giovanna's father, the Emperor Ferdinand I, who sent a silver image of the Virgin Mary in fulfilment of a vow.⁸⁴ This gift indicates the links that the Habsburg family had with Loreto, and I would suggest that Giovanna's choice of this destination may have been influenced by its recognition as a place of particular devotion by the Habsburgs.⁸⁵ This interpretation is reinforced by the choices Giovanna made in how to dress the ladies-in-waiting who accompanied her on her journey. The description of the women's dresses comes from an

⁸⁰ See chapter five, note 9; chapter four, note 64.

⁸¹ Eleonora had to ask Guglielmo's permission to accompany her daughter to Innsbruck for the latter's wedding. ASM, AG 2149, p. 312.

⁸² Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*.

⁸³ Loreto is a small town on the east coast of Italy, just south of Ancona. Catholic tradition held that the Casa Santa of Loreto was the cottage from Nazareth in which the Holy Family had lived.

⁸⁴ Orazio Torsellino, *The History of our Blessed Lady of Loreto* (Ilkley: Scolar Press, 1976), book 3, chapter xix.

⁸⁵ There was certainly no tradition of Medici visitors to the shrine. Giovanna was the first secular member of the Medici family to go to Loreto and she instituted a practice followed by the subsequent Medici Grand Duchesses Cristina di Lorena and Maria Maddalena d'Austria. See Sanger, *Women of Power*, pp. 173-75.

anonymous writer who chronicled the Duchess' reception in the city of Fabriano. His letter describes Giovanna and her fellow travellers as follows:

Her Highness came in a litter covered in crimson velvet and lined with green velvet... After...came twelve pages dressed in turquoise velvet embroidered in silver, who were a beautiful sight to see: and after them came twelve Flemish ladies-in-waiting dressed in black...⁸⁶

It appears from examining the *Guardaroba* accounts that the pages were part of the general ducal family and their costumes were paid for and commissioned by the Duke's officers, rather than the Duchess'. Giovanna's pages are wearing, therefore, Francesco's livery of turquoise velvet. However, what is interesting is the short description of the ladies-in-waiting, for their clothing was determined by the Duchess alone. Giovanna did not employ any Flemish ladies, indeed her women were a mixture of Germans and Italian natives, as the ambassador Conegrani specifies in his list of those accompanying the duchess to Loreto: 'Dodici dame fra Thedesche e Italiane'.⁸⁷ In this context, what the writer intends as Flemish, according to Orsi Landini and Niccoli may be understood more generally as Northern European, as Flemish fashions had been adopted both in Germany and in Spain.⁸⁸ Flemish gowns had high collars and were typically black, often with white undersleeves (figure 28).⁸⁹ The ladies' presence in the procession may have had a similar effect as the group of women in figure 29. The ladies are wearing the signature colour black, and it is highly likely that they wore a high, closed collar as well. The imposition of a foreign identity on the Italian members of her court is a striking reversal of what a foreign consort was expected to do. It also displays a more aggressive stance than that previously adopted by the Duchess. We have seen that courtiers played an important role in highlighting and reinforcing their lord's identity; here, instead of taking on the Medici identity and bestowing it on her courtiers, Giovanna is actively imposing her own natal identity on those around her, and doing so in an exceedingly public setting. The historian Natalie Tomas discusses Clarice de Medici's trips outside Florence and argues that in travelling alone and meeting

⁸⁶ 'veneva Sua Altezza in una lettiga coperta di velluto cremesino, fodrata di velluto verde ... Passati li detti Cavalieri ... venivano dodece Paggi vestiti di velluto Turchino concerti ricami d'argento, che facevano una bellissima vista all'occhio, e dietro loro seguivano dodece Dame fiammenghe vestite di Nero...'. ASF, MM 660, Fascicolo 16, unpaginated, bound sheaf of six entitled: 'Relatione dell'Alloggio in Fabriano della Gran Duchessa di Fiorenza, nel andare a Loreto l'Anno 1573'.

⁸⁷ See Appendix 3, letter dated 11 April 1573.

⁸⁸ Orsi Landini and Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze*, p. 32. See also Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*, p. 136.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.135.

communities under Medici control, she stood in for her husband, almost as ‘another Lorenzo’. Giovanna’s clothing choices effectively subverted this designation; instead of presenting herself as the representative of Francesco, as an ‘incorporated wife’, as Tomas describes Clarice, she is presenting herself far more ambiguously.⁹⁰

Those who accompanied Giovanna were busily informing their superiors and friends about the progress of the pilgrimage, as the anonymous report on her entrance into Fabriano demonstrates – this was not a private act of devotion but an affair of state. Giovanna was received in city after city with great banquets, gifts and processions and when she reached Loreto she was welcomed by papal representatives. The public nature of the event, and Giovanna’s decision to dress her women in non-Florentine fashions may explain the note the Ferrarese ambassador makes regarding Francesco’s behaviour at Giovanna’s departure from Florence. According to protocol, important guests and family members were accompanied a certain distance outside the city walls when departing, and yet, as Conegrani notes:

Today the most Serene Princess...set off for the Madonna of Loreto...accompanied outside the walls by Don Pietro, with his wife Donna Leonora, and Donna Isabella...The Prince did not accompany Her Highness, indeed he did not leave the palace.⁹¹

Francesco’s behaviour contrasts strongly with that of a future Medici Duke, Cosimo II, who, together with his court, accompanied his wife Maria Maddalena six miles out of Florence at the beginning of her journey to Loreto.⁹² Francesco’s lack of enthusiasm for his wife’s project may have resulted in part from his knowledge of the gifts Giovanna was planning to leave at the shrine. Information on one of the gifts she left comes from Torsellino’s *History of the House of Loreto*. In it he writes:

At her departure, in sight of the B. Virgin, she hung up two harts of gold in golden chaines, to be a monument, that she was either most deare to her and her husband, or els that the B. Virgin, the author of concord, would make her husband hart such a one unto her, as she knew hers to be unto him.⁹³

Again, it must be emphasised that gifts, like clothes, in order to have value, had to be visible. The gifts that were offered to the Madonna at Loreto were chronicled in the histories published about the House, and they were displayed within the sanctuary

⁹⁰ Tomas, *The Medici Women*, p. 31.

⁹¹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 18 April 1573.

⁹² Sanger, ‘Women of Power’, p. 177.

⁹³ Torsellino, *The History of our Blessed Lady of Loreto*, Book 4, chapter xxv.

itself.⁹⁴ By making a public offering of the two hearts, the chronicler appears to hint that Giovanna may have been intending to make her marriage woes public.

However, despite her choices for her ladies, Giovanna appears to adopt a more circumspect approach in relation to her own person. The Ferrarese ambassador wrote in March 1573 that the Duchess had taken a vow to dress only in white and turquoise.⁹⁵ I have already discussed the symbolism of white, but turquoise was Francesco's own colour; by adopting this uniform, Giovanna appears to have been stressing her own innocence, but also her continuing devotion to her husband. She is careful to cultivate an image that allows Francesco no opportunity to criticise her for untoward behaviour. Giovanna left for Loreto on the 18th of April, just under a month after her vow, and it seems that the clothing decision was intimately connected with the pilgrimage. The same anonymous writer who described the procession into Fabriano also gives a detailed description of the Duchess herself:

Her Highness was dressed completely in white satin, with a *patientia* [belt] like a monk's of turquoise silk taffeta, with a Florentine straw hat covered in white, with a simple black silk cord... On her head she wore neither jewels nor pearls, nor any other thing of value, except a string of black paternoster beads, on top of her hair, which was dressed in the Flemish style with white silk ribbons, so that, as a lesson to us, she showed herself but simply dressed, despising all the superfluities that our women from the Marches use.⁹⁶

She is wearing a Florentine hat, and has chosen to display her husband's colour: turquoise, in her dress, but her hair is dressed in the 'Flemish' fashion; her clothing therefore expresses ambiguity but avoids making a direct challenge to her husband. Only in the last few years of her life, when her position had become untenable, did Giovanna reject Florence and Florentine life entirely – petitioning her brothers to be brought back to Austria. Although Giovanna's relationship with Francesco had deteriorated badly in 1572, by April 1573, when she set off for Loreto, she had been reconciled with him. While his absence from her farewell escort and her gift to the

⁹⁴ Another of Giovanna's gifts to Loreto was a silver cross with an image of Christ by Giambologna and with Giovanna's name inscribed upon the bottom of it, also mentioned in Torsellino's work, *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ See Appendix 3, letter dated 28 March 1573.

⁹⁶ 'Sua Altezza era vestita positivamente di raso bianco, con una *patientia* alla fratesca d'ormesino Turchino, con un capello di paglia fiorentino coperto bianco, con un cordone di seta negra semplice... Nella testa non portava gioie, ne perle, ne altre cose di valuta, eccetto che un filo a modo di pater nostri negri, sopra l'avvolgimenti de capelli, et era quella testa acconcia alla fiammingha con certe bindelle di seta bianca, di modo che, a nostro ammaestramento, si è mostra vestita alla leggera in dispreggio delle tante superfluità delle nostre Donne Marchiane...'. ASF, MM 660, Fascicolo 16. unpaginated, bound sheaf of six entitled: 'Relatione dell'Alloggio in Fabriano della Gran Duchessa di Fiorenza, nel andare a Loreto l'Anno 1573'.

Virgin of the two golden hearts indicates that their relationship was not easy, she was still committed to a life in Florence and to her role as its Duchess. She was aware of her financial reliance upon the Medici, and indeed of her family's reliance on Medici funds for their struggles against the Turks.

Giovanna and her contemporaries were aware of clothing's capacity to reveal cultural categories such as rank or marital status as well as cultural values, such as piety. Her entry into Fabriano contrasts strongly with the image she chose for the arrival of the Archduke Charles and indicates that in this particular case she wished to impress those who saw her with a different message, that of her humility and pious abandonment of the trappings of wealth, as befitted someone on a religious pilgrimage. The anonymous report describes her wearing a belt 'like a monk's' and paternoster beads in her hair, and this also provides a stark contrast with the beautiful, richly decorated girdles and the pearl hairnets worn by the Florentine ladies in Bargagli's letter.⁹⁷ However, again Giovanna excels in the craft of ambiguity and this clothing message is pursued only to a certain extent. The Duchess chose to wear white satin, which, as I have pointed out, was particularly expensive and was also a colour associated with triumphal entrances and royalty. We can compare this to Christine of Lorraine's dress, when she visited Loreto.⁹⁸ Torsellino describes her dress as 'a poor ash-coloured garment' and he comments that her ladies were similarly attired, while he describes Giovanna as wearing 'a white and a plaine garment', which indicates that she wore white and turquoise throughout her pilgrimage.⁹⁹ Giovanna chose to stand out in pure white against the black backdrop of her ladies because she felt less able to sacrifice the message of power that clothing could carry in favour of a message of humility and religiosity.¹⁰⁰ Giovanna was therefore able to impart multiple messages through the medium of clothing: she demonstrated her piety by being unadorned, and her rank through the skilful use of choreography and colour; she publicly asserted her identity as Duchess of Florence through the livery of the pages, her Florentine hat, perhaps her choice of turquoise (Francesco's colour) in her own dress, and her gift of the gold hearts, but she also highlighted her personal prestige as a Habsburg, choosing a place of particular Habsburg worship, wearing a visibly non-Florentine hairstyle, and most importantly, stamping a northern-European identity on her women.

⁹⁷ See note 78.

⁹⁸ She was the wife of the Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici.

⁹⁹ Torsellino, *The History of our Blessed Lady of Loreto*, Book 5, chapter xxii.

¹⁰⁰ Torsellino describes Giovanna's garb as 'white and plaine', but not poor.

Conclusion

It is impossible to provide a conclusive explanation for why Giovanna, in contrast to her sisters, might have chosen to place such visible emphasis on her non-Florentine, Habsburg background, but I would suggest that the answers lie in her particular position as Duchess of Florence and wife to Francesco de' Medici. She may have felt that she was marrying lower down the social scale, and have wished to highlight her own higher status; however, other factors may also have influenced her actions. As I have demonstrated in section one, female consorts operated for the most part by interceding with their husbands. This meant that their power effectively depended upon their relationship with their husband and if this was compromised, then so too was their ability to wield power at court. In Giovanna's case, as we have seen, her relationship with her husband was difficult; furthermore influence with Francesco was impeded by his affair with Bianca, who channelled intercessory powers away from Giovanna and into her own hands. As a consequence, Giovanna had to find another way of asserting her position at court and rendering herself an attractive patron, and she chose to do so by highlighting the fact that she belonged to a powerful and prestigious family. She selected clothing as a highly visible means of drawing attention to her identity, and one over which she had financial control.

However, although her Habsburg background did provide her with personal prestige, the financial weakness of the family and its dependence on the Medici meant that she was unable to rely on them effectively for help, and by refusing to adopt a clear pro-Medici stance in her dress and politics, she also alienated her husband and his family. Giovanna therefore found herself increasingly isolated during her life and her control over her own courtiers faltered, as her accusations of being spied on and having her letters intercepted demonstrate.¹⁰¹ In the end the private struggle between Francesco and Giovanna effectively sabotaged the public relationship between the Duchess and those around her. This demonstrates that, as long as the consort had no officially recognised institutional role, her public influence depended entirely on her private situation. While she had the option of choosing which of her two families to ally herself with, if the one she chose proved to be too weak, then her own status could be fatally compromised. In Giovanna's case it appears that the language of clothes could only go

¹⁰¹ Anxieties about the interception of letters are present in the correspondence between Giovanna and Baron Siegfried Preiner, ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, pp. 109, 115; letters dated 29 May 1576 and 9 July 1576.

so far in its rhetoric of persuasion. They could only give the impression of power, they could not give power itself.

The next two chapters will address the exchange of foodstuffs as a further means of constructing networks and relaying specific messages. I have argued that clothing was one of the few types of object over which women, including consorts, tended to have long-term possession as well as usufruct. In going through the Duchesses' archival documentation, gifts of textiles are superseded in number by only one other type of gift, that of food. I would suggest that foodstuffs, as economically insignificant and immaterial objects, which are not therefore part of the stable of possessions tied to male inheritance, nor barred from the majority of women because of their expense, makes them a useful object to examine in the context of a discussion of the power and patronage relations of the female consort. So far I have primarily discussed gifts from the Duchesses to those around them, my next case study will also focus on the gifts that were sent to them and the relationships that such objects could help to initiate and sustain.

Chapter Eight

The Mechanics of Food Gifts in Societal Relations

Introduction

In the introduction to section two, I argued that gifts were a vital way for the female consort to establish connections with her new family and the members of her new court. In chapter six I examined the Duchesses' activities in distributing gifts and actively creating networks through textiles and their display. Most of these examples were gifts given vertically across the social hierarchies – that is from the Duchess to a social inferior or superior. In this chapter I will look more closely at another aspect, i.e. the use of gifts as a form of introduction, one which allowed for more 'horizontal' connections to be created between relative equals as well as between people from different social groups. I will examine the Duchesses' position as the recipients of gifts, what was expected of them and why they were selected to be the beneficiaries of such donations. Such gifts, chronicled in letters and ambassadors' reports, as well as in lists of accounts, provide vital evidence of the wealth of contacts the three sisters maintained. Of all the gifts that circulated at court, foodstuffs appear most frequently; their relatively low economic value also ensured that they could be sent as presents from persons at every social level. As such they provide a valuable means of understanding the types of relationships the Duchesses and those they were in contact with were attempting to create at all levels.

I will analyse the circumstances of such gifts, the responses to them, the documentary evidence that discusses such gift-giving, and the information it provides of the sisters' personal and political relationships and of their creation and maintenance of patronage circles. While in chapter seven I examined some of the ways in which the Duchesses could manipulate clothing to alert those around them to potential conflicts or ambivalent attitudes, in this chapter I will also discuss the way food gifts might be used

in a more propitiatory fashion, to smooth over problems in relationships and to negotiate political sensitivities.

The Duchess as Provider: Food at Court

These Lords...held... a great and sumptuous banquet with 150 gentlewomen...and, although it could seat ten people or more, only their two Highnesses [Giovanna and the Archduke Charles], the Duke [Cosimo] and the Lady Isabella ate at the Lords' table, and nobody else, and His Excellency [Cosimo] sat so far away from His Highness [Charles] that he was outside the canopy by half a *braccio*...as he always has been when eating...no men ate at the ladies' tables, but Don Pietro [Pietro de'Medici] sat at table with His Highness' gentlemen...¹

This passage from the Ferrarese ambassador's report describes a feast that took place during the Archduke Charles of Austria's visit to Florence. The seating arrangements reflect some of the anxieties regarding status, hierarchies and appropriate behaviour associated with the consumption of food. Such issues were present not only on special occasions, such as banquets, but during everyday life at court. Although it is not as personal as a one-to-one exchange, the allocation of foodstuffs to court members can be seen as a form of gift-giving. In providing for his court, the ruler demonstrated his munificence, and in return he could expect loyalty and service from those he nurtured. This concept of the prince's *liberalitas* is discussed by Natalie Zemon Davis, who offers the example of the medieval tale of Melusine, where the guests at the wedding banquet were constantly astounded at the abundance of food and drink presented to them.²

The archives demonstrate that certain regulations existed to control this consumption and to ensure that it took place appropriately. For example, in Mantua only certain food items, such as those which were uncooked, could be taken out of the court to be eaten elsewhere.³ All other food consumption had to take place visibly in court.

¹ See Appendix 3, letter dated 2 May 1569.

² Davis, *The Gift*, p. 27.

³ Giancarlo Malacarne has published the relevant archival documents in his work, Malacarne, *Sulla mensa del principe*, p. 243 and following. The archival reference is ASM, AG 394, p. 734 and following. For a discussion of the Gonzaga court and those employed within it, see Malacarne, chapter one. Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna' (pp. 90-96), has also discussed in detail the structure of the court, although neither he nor Malacarne deals with the internal structure of the female court. Guerzoni specifies that the '*spese del vivere*', which were items that could be used and consumed outside the boundaries of the court, could include not just items of food, but also textiles and items of dress, horses and even the rent for their house. With respect to food, the *spesa* included different kinds of foods depending on the placement of the courtier within the social hierarchy; however, some of those who received this *spesa*, particularly those who worked in the arena of food preparation and serving, were not allowed to take any of it out of the court, even if uncooked, unless they were ill.

This was partly to avoid the creation of a black market selling the ducal provisions for private profit, but the emphasis on eating and drinking taking place under the ruler's roof was also clearly aimed at highlighting commensality, publicly demonstrating the lord's ability to nourish his followers. Going back to the Middle Ages, and following Aristotle's arguments, the prince was seen as the head of the mystical body of the people. Following this philosophy, as the head must nourish the body, so the lord must be seen to nourish his people, here represented by the court.⁴ By eating under his supervision, the courtiers are not only nourished by their ruler but also recognise the prince as *their* prince, so reinforcing each appropriate role.⁵

Those present at court ranged from the man in charge of sweeping the castle grounds, to the nobleman who had the privilege of holding the ducal napkin at table.⁶ They, and their servants formed the large group of '*bocche*' (literally, 'mouths') who all expected to eat at the expense of the ruler. This was an overriding right, yet each person did not receive equal amounts or the same kind of food; remuneration was arranged according to status. Some received monetary rewards as well as food and drink; others, such as the kitchen apprentices, only received meals and lodging. Furthermore, courtiers were fed at different sittings, and in different places in the palace, one group for example feeding off the leftovers from another table. Less prestigious cuts of meat, second-hand dishes or separate tables all denoted inferiority, just as the opposite denoted superiority – food within the universe of the court was consciously recognised as an important socio-economic signifier and only those of the highest level ate in the same room as the duke.⁷

In Mantua, the Duchess Eleonora had an independent residence in the palace of Porto. She was in charge of making her own arrangements for procuring provisions for her court.⁸ As a consequence, she was able to ensure that her courtiers saw her as their

⁴ The lord also played this role within wider society and not just at court, by providing food in times of scarcity.

⁵ Martin Aurell, 'Le roi mangeur et les élites à table', in *La Sociabilité à table: commensalité et convivialité à travers les âges*, ed. by Martin Aurell, Olivier Dumoulin and Francoise Thelamon (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 1992), pp. 118-29 (p. 123).

⁶ Those fed at the duke's expense also included old courtiers who were no longer fit to work and who were awarded a sort of pension consisting of food, firewood and sometimes lodging. See Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzaghesca in età moderna' (p. 91).

⁷ For information on differences in rank reflected in the diet and dining arrangements of the household of the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, see Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat*, pp. 57-58.

⁸ See chapter six, note 13.

direct provider and ‘nourisher’ without direct intervention from the Duke.⁹ There is little evidence of the arrangements set in place for Barbara, but an indication that she was not in charge of providing food for the members of her court comes from the Venetian ambassador Alvise Contarini’s report on Ferrara, in which he notes that the Duke spent some of his revenue on such things as the upkeep of the stables, hunting, and the ‘piatto della duchessa’. This suggests that the expense and responsibility for provisioning the Duchess’ court lay with the Duke rather than Barbara.¹⁰ A similar kind of arrangement also appears to have been in place for a previous Duchess. According to Diane Ghirardo, Lucrezia Borgia, Duchess of Ferrara from 1501 to 1519, was assigned goods, including food, as part of her yearly allowance.¹¹

Giovanna’s situation, on the other hand, appears to have varied: at certain times she shared her household expenses with other members of the extended Medici family, despite the fact that, according to the terms of her contract, she was supposed to pay for her own food and that of her courtiers.¹² This suggests that she was not always able to take advantage of the symbolic significance of being solely responsible for providing for her courtiers. The absence of clear divisions between the different courts in Florence could therefore impact strongly on the Duchess’ ability to extend visible clientage. While Giovanna was able to maintain control over one aspect of the material needs of her courtiers: dress, she was not able to do so in all areas.

However, although the Duchesses might face restrictions barring them from taking advantage of the opportunities for extending patronage offered by court provisioning, they did have access to another avenue of operation, that of exchanging individual food gifts. The exchange of such items adhered to the same rules of hierarchy and status, and allowed them to create networks that stretched far beyond the walls of the palace.

Relationship Mediators

The Florentine archive contains a series of letters from the Medici Ambassador in Ferrara, Bernardo Canigiani, providing detailed reports of his life in the Este duchy. Six

⁹ However, as I have discussed in chapter two, Eleonora could face problems in this regard from the unreliable provision of her allowance, which might affect her capacity to ensure regular food provisions were made.

¹⁰ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, ed. by Ventura, p. 73.

¹¹ Lucrezia was allocated 6,000 ducats in cash and 6,000 ducats in goods, a sum that remained constant until the outbreak of war in 1509. Ghirardo, ‘Lucrezia Borgia as Entrepreneur’, (p. 59).

¹² ASF, MM 16, Inserto 6, p. 24.

of these letters discuss gifts of foodstuffs from the Duke Francesco de' Medici to the Duchess of Ferrara, his sister in law, Barbara (see Appendix 5, Section Three). As discussed in chapter one, the Medici and the Este were engaged in a bitter rivalry over precedence. They continued to maintain diplomatic relationships, hosting ambassadors at each other's courts, but the two dukes were not on good terms. The Venetian ambassador reported in 1565,

He [Alfonso II d'Este] loves the Duke of Mantua because he is related to him through different people, and because he [Guglielmo Gonzaga] does not get on very well with Florence...¹³

It is within this context that we should view the gifts sent to Alfonso II d'Este's wife. Renata Ago has discussed the different levels upon which gifts could work: on a formal and regimented level, where gifts of determined economic value were required, such as those awarded to ambassadors at the end of their posting, and on less formal levels, where objects of minimal economic value could operate more subtly to establish and maintain relationships in politically sensitive situations, without causing offence or accusations of bribery. She also argues that while meetings between men allowed little room for manoeuvre as they were regulated by the constant necessity of safeguarding one's rank and status, one could avoid this difficulty by establishing relationships with their female relatives.¹⁴ This analysis can shed light on Francesco's approaches to his sister-in-law, Barbara. Relations between Francesco and Alfonso were strained because of the conflict over precedence, yet it would have been politically unwise to cut off all ties to the Este family altogether. A diplomatic veneer of friendship was favoured. For this reason too, although the rivalry between the Medici and the Este was public, Cosimo declined the Este invitation to Barbara and Alfonso's wedding on the pretexts of age and the preparations for Giovanna's arrival. He stressed that unavoidable impediments rather than ill will prevented him from attending:

If we could, we would have willingly accepted, to come and enjoy ourselves, but our age and the preoccupations that hang over us for the reception of the Princess [Giovanna] our daughter-in-law, that have all come upon us at the same time, do not allow us to...¹⁵

¹³ 'Ama il duca di Mantova, perchè gli è parente per più vie, e perchè non ha molto buona intenzione con Fiorenza...'. *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*. Appendix, ed. by Alberi, p. 245.

¹⁴ Ago, 'Donne, doni e public relations' (pp. 175-83).

¹⁵ 'Se potessimo, haremmo accettato volentieri lo invito, per venire a godere di effetto, ma l'età nostra et le occupationi che ci soprastanno per il recevimento della signora Principessa nostra Nuora, che tutti si accorranò a un tempo, non lo comportano...'. ASF, MdP 223, p. 69.

Francesco and Alfonso also maintained officially friendly relations. Barbara, as the sister of his own wife, afforded Francesco a convenient means of doing so without risking challenges to his status. Food gifts were small and economically insignificant, but they were also easy to tailor to the recipient's tastes and needs. They were presented by the ambassador and the Duchess would have received them in the presence of her courtiers, affording indirect lines of communication between the two courts.

Barbara was the recipient in these exchanges, but she was not an entirely passive pawn. Out of the gifts reported by Canigiani, three are described as being sent on or shared with other elite nobles. The recipients are Barbara's sister, Margareta, Barbara's relatives in Innsbruck, and an unnamed Cardinal [probably Ippolito d'Este, Barbara's brother-in-law]. For example,

[Barbara] kisses Your Excellency's hands, praising me again for the lovely plums, which she shared with the Cardinal and she hardly rises at all from her bed.¹⁶

Then,

Her Highness's fevers are lessening in strength if not in quantity, and she thanks Your Excellency for the Genoese pomegranates (and she has sent some as far as Innsbruck).¹⁷

Finally,

The Lady Duchess was quite well the other day, although she had a fever, and with infinite modesty she asked me about those Genoese plums, of which I managed to get around 50 from certain friends of mine from Lucca, and she sent the majority of them immediately to the Queen Margherita, keeping the rest for herself and enjoying them very much according to what I have heard.¹⁸

This three-step food exchange, whereby gifts were passed on to further recipients, could be interpreted as having very specific aims, with benefits to both the original sender and the initial recipient.¹⁹ They were especially important to the Duchess in her position as female consort. By forwarding gifts initially sent to her, Barbara told important contacts that she was a figure worthy of receiving gifts and while she might not wield power

¹⁶ See Appendix 5, Section Three, letter dated 30 September 1566.

¹⁷ Ibid., letter dated 21 October 1566.

¹⁸ Ibid., letter dated 4 December 1566. It is likely that Barbara's sister, Margareta, is intended here. All the Archduchesses were allowed to call themselves 'Queen', thanks to their mother, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia. The only alternative is Marguerite de Valois, but she was not yet crowned and would have been only 13 years old, so seems an unlikely candidate.

¹⁹ This was a practice adopted by princes and kings across Europe. James I, who received gifts of food from Ferdinando I de' Medici, almost certainly sent some of what he received on to others. Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts', (pp. 291-92).

directly, she did have access to those who could do so. This policy enhanced the status of the recipient, but outside recognition of the relationship by social equals also benefitted the giver, which may explain why the ambassador Canigiani took steps to keep the Duke informed of where the food gifts were sent. Indeed, Francesco may also have been motivated to send Barbara gifts in the hope and expectation that she would then pass them on, thereby providing Francesco with a useful advertisement of his position as trusted friend to the Habsburg family (this may have been especially important to Francesco as the Medici family was still in the process of asserting its position on the European political stage).

Although these items were of little economic value, it was a matter of pride for a gift to be particularly pleasing to the recipient. Canigiani reported on the types of foods that might please Barbara. After her death, the Ferrarese ambassador Ercole Cortile chronicled the food gifts that were now directly exchanged between the Medici Duke and the widower Alfonso. One such gift was sent to Francesco by Alfonso in 1576:

The said Count [the Count of Nuvolara] immediately sent a sturgeon to the Duke [Francesco], and I believe that he will also send him the Caviar, but perhaps he won't like it, as he always eats that of Your Highness [Alfonso's previous gift]. If Your Highness sent him a sturgeon with fresh eggs, I think he would be very pleased, from what I could make out from the words of the majordomo, although he was not at all clear...²⁰

These gifts played a vital diplomatic role, maintaining an outwardly warm relationship at a time of considerable stress. At the same time as Alfonso and Francesco were exchanging gifts through Alfonso's ambassador, the latter was also feeding his master information on Francesco's relationship with Bianca, and arranging for Giovanna's letters to be secretly taken out of Florence and sent to the Emperor. A hint of this may lie in Cortile's addendum on Francesco's actions upon receipt of Alfonso's gift of sturgeon:

He [Francesco] also made them leave several pounds of sturgeon for sending as gifts, and they say that he sent it to Bianca...²¹

As well as sending gifts to his sister-in-law, Francesco also sent items of food to his wife, Giovanna, as did his father Cosimo, his brother Pietro, and his sister Isabella:

Most Serene and Honourable Consort

²⁰ See Appendix 3, letter dated 15 April 1576.

²¹ Ibid.

Yesterday evening at one at night a courier arrived with the trout, which I cheerfully ate for love of Your Highness...²²

Food gifts appear to have been chosen as an ideal means of maintaining at least a public facade of cordial relationships and ensuring that channels of communication remained open, not only with political enemies, but also with family members, especially when they were apart. So, for example, Isabella wrote from Pisa to Giovanna in Florence telling her that as soon as she had arrived she had tried to find fruit to send to her:

Immediately upon my arrival I diligently looked for fruit, and those few which were found are being sent to you according to your bidding, but not because they are worthy of you, but you must blame the weather and not our will, which is always most ready to obey you as is our duty...²³

While Isabella may have expended efforts on maintaining good relations with Bianca, as Ercole Cortile asserted,²⁴ it was also in her interests to sustain a dialogue with Giovanna. This is, for example, evident in the fact that despite Cosimo's fierce rebuttal of Giovanna's accusations and anger upon his marriage to Camilla, the Duchess was still able to ensure that Camilla was not allowed to attend court occasions at which she herself was present, such as the banquets she arranged for the weddings of Magdalene von Sprinzenstein, and Clarice Minucci, and the celebrations that took place in honour of St John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint.²⁵ Isabella lived in Florence in the old Medici residence in the Via Larga, despite the fact that her husband, Paolo Giordano Orsini, resided in Rome and frequently asked her to join him there. By sending Giovanna items of food or doing her favours, such as looking after her daughter Eleonora while she was ill,²⁶ Isabella was behaving with appropriate courtesy given the difference in their rank, but she may also have hoped to keep Giovanna's good will in order to rely on her intercessory powers if needed.

Giovanna and her sisters also sent family members items of fruit. Giovanna sent peaches to her father-in-law:

My most Serene and Honourable Lady,

²² See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 28 July 1571.

²³ Ibid., letter dated 1 May 1568.

²⁴ See Appendix 3, letter dated 4th February 1576 (unpaginated). See also Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, pp. 237-42.

²⁵ See Appendix 3, letter dated 18 November 1570 and letter dated 13 June 1573; ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze 23, Fascicolo 5, letter dated 27 June 1573.

²⁶ ASF, MdP 6366, p. 396.

I was pleased to receive the peaches Your Highness courteously sent me, as I was also most pleased to hear that you and your daughters are well, and that you are also pregnant...²⁷

Barbara sent Alfonso truffles while he was away with his troops on campaign with the Emperor against the Turks:

I thank Your Highness with all my soul for your loving letter and for the truffles you sent me with it, which I greatly appreciated, and I beg you to make sure you stay happy and healthy and let me have frequent news of you...²⁸

Eleonora sent Guglielmo artichokes while he was absent from Mantua:

Your Excellency knows that I and our son are well, through God's grace, I am sending Your Excellency some artichokes, as I know that you can't find many in those parts...²⁹

Food gifts could therefore be an act of courtesy, a gesture of goodwill among family members, and a way of fostering ongoing relationships, when one of those involved was absent.

Food Gifts and Social Networks

Because of the informal nature of the items, food gifts could be sent regularly without having to wait for a particular event, such as New Year, or an official visit. They were a vital tool for the three Duchesses as they rarely travelled. Given the consorts' lack of finances, food gifts were a useful means of maintaining regular contact with people whom they could not visit, such as their natal family. Thus Giovanna sent food gifts to her Habsburg relatives, as did both Barbara and Eleonora:

All the jams, pastes and other things were found in such good condition that it was amazing...; and they were so pleasing to His Majesty, that he did not want to entrust them to anyone, but he himself has kept them, and kept the keys...³⁰

The female consort was forced to leave her country to join her husband's court, yet she still relied on her natal family to send her dowry and provide support if she was struggling with her new family. In such a situation, the Habsburg Archduchesses, two of whom did not receive their dowry, may have felt impelled to remind their relatives of their existence. One diplomatic way of doing so was through these small gifts. It is

²⁷ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 3 February 1571.

²⁸ See Appendix 5, Section Three, letter dated 17 August 1566.

²⁹ See Appendix 5, Section Two, letter dated 8 May 1566.

³⁰ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 27 February 1572.

perhaps not surprising that Giovanna sent her portrait to Vienna together with gifts of food in 1572, when she was going through a period of conflict with Francesco.³¹

Giovanna also appears to have used similar gifts to strengthen her relationship with important members of the clergy and the Pope, following a similar format as those presents of textiles I have already discussed:

The driver, about whom you had written to me in your letter of the 28th last, arrived here Friday night, and of the four boxes he brought, we immediately delivered the two smaller ones addressed to the Cardinal of Augusta [Otto Truchsess de Waldburg] to His Most Illustrious Holiness together with Our Mistress the Princess' letter; we presented the other two [boxes] with the *cotognato* [fruit paste] just as they came, [as] they had arrived in good condition, to His Benediction [the Pope Pius V] on behalf of Her Highness, together with the letter that she had written to him, with efficacious words, and full of affection and reverence and that Lady's devotion to His Holiness. One could not believe, my Antonio, with what demonstrations of pleasure and happiness, the Pope received that present, and how pleasing it was to him, seeming only that there was too much of it, and enough to last him, as His Benediction said, ten years...³²

This letter is written by the Medici ambassador in Rome, Alessandro de' Medici, to Francesco's secretary Antonio Serguidi, the same Medici officials who would discuss the Duchess' gift of linens to the Pope in a letter dated just under a year later.³³ This discussion of Giovanna's gift-giving activities may have been of particular interest to the Medici family at this particular point in time because the Pope had just issued the bull declaring Cosimo I Grand Duke of Tuscany (August 1569), however the coronation had not yet taken place³⁴ and there was considerable hostility to the idea from the Habsburg Emperor. Cosimo could not be seen to campaign openly for confirmation of the title, but Giovanna's informal gifts and her role as a key interlocutor with the Pope might operate indirectly to his benefit.

When the Duchesses sent food gifts to their Habsburg relatives or others, as well as ensuring that they were not forgotten and that key contacts were maintained, they were also able to exploit these exchanges as opportunities to demonstrate their ability to

³¹ Ibid., letter dated 14 March 1572. For the letters detailing the conflict between Giovanna and Francesco, see chapter five, 'Conflict in the Family'.

³² See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 12 December 1569. Just as with the gift of linens, which were probably sewed by her ladies, it is likely that these preserves were hand-made. There are bills relating to the purchase of sugar to make *cotognato* by the Duchess in ASF, Depositeria Generale Parte Antica 643, Fascicolo dated 1577-78, p. 738.

³³ See chapter six, note 49.

³⁴ It would take place on 5th March 1570. Guarini, 'Cosimo I de' Medici' (p. 45).

control the rapid passage of objects through complex geo-political space. They had to ensure that perishable objects travelled through foreign countries without hindrance, arrived sufficiently quickly for them to be in a fit state for consumption, and that someone was available at the end of the journey to present them to the eventual recipients. This demanded not only organisational powers, but considerable authority and influence over the resources of their respective duchies. As a consequence, food gifts were a valuable resource, but there was an obvious risk of products arriving damaged or rotten, and they could also disappear along the way. Giancarlo Malacarne provides a good example of the dangers of thievery with a letter from Isabella d'Este complaining that a large quantity of shellfish had gone missing from the sack sent to her by her brother, the Duke of Ferrara by the time they reached her in Mantua:

Yesterday we received a sack containing oysters, wedge shells, clams and *spolette* [a type of crustacean] sent to us in the post with a letter from our most honourable brother the Duke; and we understand that the sack contains less than a quarter of what was sent from Ferrara...

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Bernardo Canigiani provides another example of the steps undertaken to thwart stealing: he always made sure he stated the exact number of fruits he had received in his reports back to Francesco, in order to ensure that none had gone missing without his knowledge.³⁶ The safety of the products could be especially problematic for the female consort because her access to resources could be limited. So, for example, Eleonora struggled to find a way of getting the fowls she had acquired by means of the Mantuan ambassador in Venice down to her in Mantua safely and securely. A series of letters were exchanged between the Duchess and the ambassador Capilupi discussing this problem and Eleonora wrote to ask him to keep a look out for any boats going between Mantua and Venice that they could safely use:

It only remains to find some way of transporting them here safely, regarding which we will do our best to stay vigilant to hear if any boats will come, either belonging to our Lord Duke or to others who could do us the service of taking them, in which case we will send

³⁵ 'Havessimo heri in un sacho ostreghe, calcinelli, peveraze et spolette mandatene per le poste cum una littera dell'Illustrissimo signor Duca nostro fratello honorandissimo, quale cose comprehendemo non erano il quarto di quello era stato mandato da Ferrara...'. Malacarne, *Sulla mensa del principe*, p. 105.

³⁶ 'The 25 pomegranates have arrived, and two or three have suffered, and the box of sugared plums have also arrived, in very good shape'; 'I received via courier 42 simiane plums, very fresh and in a very good state, brought here for Her Highness, to whom I immediately took them'. See Appendix 5, Section Three, letter dated 16 October 1566; letter dated 30 September 1566.

someone on purpose to take charge of them. In the meantime, you must also stay alert in case any good opportunity of sending them down to us safely arises.³⁷

Her letters indicate that she had no boats of her own, so she was forced to rely on those of her husband or on other alternatives.

Even when it was possible to ensure the transport of items, this did not mean that they always arrived safely and in peak condition. Relating to the preservation of the food during the journey, Canigiani noted in one of his letters to Francesco that the consignment of pomegranates he had received contained a couple of damaged ones,³⁸ while Eleonora wrote to a certain Gabriele Calzone saying that she wished some fruits had arrived in better condition:

Magnificent and most dear [Gabriele Calzone]. We have received, together with your letter of the 13th, the six baskets with the fruits which you had sent on, having been sent to you by our cousin the Cardinal Gonzaga; we would have been more pleased if they had reached us in better condition, as they have neither fruit nor leaves on them at present. We commend you for your diligence in sending them to us. May our Lord God preserve you, Leonora Duchess of Mantua...³⁹

This last missive seems to indicate that although the word used is ‘frutti’, which should be translated as ‘fruits’, Eleonora may be referring to fruit bearing trees or plants. This would be entirely credible as there was an active field of exchange of plants for stocking gardens and orchards,⁴⁰ and Eleonora had been left the splendid palace and gardens of Porto, which were richly stocked with fruit and vegetable plants, by her mother-in-law Margherita Paleologa, who had in turn received them from Isabella d’Este.⁴¹ Sometimes

³⁷ See Appendix 5, Section Two, letters dated 6 March 1571, 13 March 1571, 3 April 1571, 10 April 1571, 23 April 1571, 1 May 1571 (see quote above), 22 May 1571.

³⁸ See note 36.

³⁹ See Appendix 5, Section Two, letter dated 24 April 1585.

⁴⁰ Ercole Cortile sent various reports to the Duke Alfonso discussing the sending of some lemon trees and a jasmine plant he had received as gifts for the Duke together with instructions for looking after them. See Appendix 3, letters dated 28 April 1576, 13 May 1576, 3 September 1576.

⁴¹ ASM, AG 332, Rubrica 2, unpaginated. This *busta* includes several copies of the last will and testament of Margherita Paleologa, one of which, dated to 21 May 1563 contains the following extract: ‘et volendo anche seguire la volunta della felice memoria di Madama Illustrissima la signora Isabella gia Marchesa di Mantua suocera sua osservandissima le lascia medemamente per suo apiacere et diporto il palazzo et giardini di porto con le possessioni vicine, et con ogni et qualunche melioramenti et edeffici fattegli per essa signora testatrice col medemo obbligo che fu dalla prefata signora Illustrissima Marchesa lasciato per suo testamento...’. (And, wishing to follow also the wishes of the most Illustrious Lady Isabella, of blessed memory, once Marchioness of Mantua and her most honorable mother-in-law, she [Margherita] leaves also [to Eleonora] for her pleasure and enjoyment, the palace and garden of Porto, with the nearby possessions and with all the buildings and improvements made by the testator, with the same obligation that was set down by the Illustrious Marchioness in her will.). This endowment is repeated word for word

attempts to avoid the problem of preservation were made by sending gifts of animals while still alive: a letter addressed to Giovanna accompanied a gift which included seven live *cotornici* (similar to partridges), which may have been kept alive in order to ensure that they arrived fresh:

Francho Borromei, my agent, and the bearer [of this letter] will give Your Highness some fruit from my garden in Pescia, seven live partridges, and a goat, killed by accident by my sheepdogs...⁴²

The Duchesses were not only active in sending gifts, they were the frequent recipients of items from those who wished to engage in patronage relationships with them. As I have demonstrated in section one, female consorts did not always have an official role in administration or government, but by virtue of their position, they could intercede with officials and with their husbands to influence the allocation of jobs and titles, the resolution of court cases, and exemption from penalties and punishments. As such their influence was informal and was best approached through informal channels. Some of the letters the Duchesses received, which were accompanied by gifts of food, should be read in the light of this particular situation. Letters directed to Giovanna substantiate the theory that food gifts were the ideal accompaniment to the construction and maintenance of patronage relationships, and indeed helped to broker them. An example of this type of brokerage is a letter dating to September 1573 which the captain Leonardo Rabatti wrote to Giovanna:

As the time for allocating the office of the *Otto di guardia e balia* [criminal justice magistracy] is approaching, most humbly I turn to Your Most Serene Highness, that you may deign, as I am a loyal servant to you, to favour me with the Most Serene Prince your husband...I send you sixty *beccafichi* [a small bird prized for its meat], not because it is a present worthy of Your Most Serene Highness, but for my humble and faithful servitude...⁴³

In his letter, Rabatti specifies that he sends the birds not as a present worthy of her, but as a token of his humble servitude to her. This is important as it indicates the relationship that Rabatti was attempting to establish with Giovanna through the medium of his gift and the significance with which he was imbuing it. He emphasises his own social position with respect to Giovanna's and also specifies the kind of relationship he

in a booklet dated to 30 January 1567, which is also a copy of Margherita's will and which bears a notarial seal.

⁴² See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 30 October 1573.

⁴³ Ibid., letter dated 1 September 1573.

wishes to establish with her – as her *servitore*. What he is offering is the creation of a relationship which will benefit him; through Giovanna's intermediary action he can reach the Duke and obtain important benefices. In return he offers Giovanna the open avowal of his service, as one of a network of people whom Giovanna can rely on to show her respect and allegiance through small indicators, such as food gifts, which serve to reinforce Giovanna's own social rank and influence. By sharing these, for presumably Giovanna was not meant to eat all sixty *beccafichi* herself, the Duchess could render the gift publicly known and demonstrate to others, as Barbara did when she shared out the gifts she had received, that she was perceived as a figure of influence and was therefore worth cultivating.

Food, as a gift from those seeking patronage to those high above them in the social hierarchy, was a judicious choice. A magnificent gift, a precious or expensive object, might offend rather than recommend itself. It would subvert the normal rules of play, whereby the giving of such items was the prerogative of those in the highest positions of power, meant to demonstrate the patron's munificence and magnificence.⁴⁴ Food is a token of respect rather than an actual benefit; it is of itself ephemeral and by its transience it avoids leaving the recipient beholden, evading the subversion of the proper system of patronage. Food is also an appropriate gift when seeking the patronage of someone powerful. At its root it signifies power itself: in a society where scarcity of foodstuffs is a regular occurrence, he who eats is powerful. By consuming food, the eater becomes powerful and demonstrates his power, and so the giving of food may perhaps have been understood as a symbolic handing over or attribution of power to the recipient.⁴⁵ Furthermore, because of their ephemeral nature, gifts of food could be repeated over time, and at comparatively little cost to the giver, thereby fostering and reinforcing the relationship. Whereas a magnificent gift always had to be surpassed by the next one, potentially leading to an impasse as the resources or imagination of the giver ran out, this was not necessary with food gifts, which made them vital in the low-grade maintenance of patronage relationships. So, for example, the captain Domenico Rinuccini sent Giovanna yearly 'tributes' of fruit, perfume, and thrushes:

⁴⁴ Brigitte Buettner highlights the importance of decorum in her article on New Year's gifts at the Valois court. She stresses that merchants and bankers did not give the most expensive presents, even if they could have afforded to do so. Buettner, 'Past Presents', (p. 616).

⁴⁵ Montanari, *Alimentazione e cultura nel Medioevo*, p. 23.

having in order this year's tribute I am sending you, during my move, a box with 13 flasks of the perfumed water which is distilled here, together with some fruit from my garden here at the Rocca...⁴⁶

I am sending you 156 thrushes, which I caught this morning in two bird hunts that I do here in these hills in Colle, and this year we have caught fewer in these areas than in previous years, and this will be the tribute that I will send you every year instead of the flasks of Pietrasanta waters...⁴⁷

while Lelia Imperiale-Di Negro sent her gifts of fruit:

Wishing Your Highness to see me in particular as her most devoted servant, as I am of all Your Highnesses, and wishing at the same time to obtain the favour of being employed in some way by Your Highness, I have decided to kiss your hands with this letter, and *attrevirmi* [?] to visit you with some branches of fruit from here, which will be in three boxes, to see if by this means, if you like any of them, I might sometimes have the opportunity to be employed by you in some service...⁴⁸

She prefixes her gift in one of the two letters which have survived (see Appendix 5) with the word *solite*, which would indicate that they were a regular occurrence. These letters demonstrate that food gifts were not always sent with a precise favour in mind.

While the female consort was often asked to operate as a mediator, interceding for others, members of her court could also be asked to operate in the same fashion, acting as go-betweens in the gift process. So, the Princess of Piombino, Virginia Fieschi-Appiani, wrote to Barbara d'Andrian, Giovanna's head *cameriera* and therefore a senior member of her court and asked her to mediate a gift of artichokes, peas and flowers to the young Duchess:

I ask Your Ladyship to present my letter with the small gift, but together with them, to present my person to Her Highness, as the most loyal and attached servant that she has, and, as I have no greater desire than preserving Her Highness' favour, may it please Your Ladyship as my interpreter, to keep me in favour, as I also desire that you do, as well as with Your Ladyship, with all those ladies...⁴⁹

Fieschi-Appiani then included with her letter to Barbara, another letter which the latter was supposed to give to Giovanna:

⁴⁶ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 18 November 1573.

⁴⁷ Ibid., letter dated 4 October 1574.

⁴⁸ Ibid., letter dated 17 December 1571.

⁴⁹ Ibid., letter dated 16 January 1567.

My most Serene Lady. The present that I am sending to Your Highness is not worthy, but the good will with which I serve you is; some artichokes, peas and flowers have come to me from Genoa; as they are fruit new in the region, Your Highness will accept them, not as a gift worthy of you, but as a thing that the season does not provide, and with it please accept me, as I have devoted myself your humble servant for evermore; nor do I wish for anything greater than being kept in Your Highness' good graces, and I kiss your hands with every reverence and pray Our Lord God for your every happiness, and for my own permanence in your grace.⁵⁰

Her approach appears to have succeeded. Giovanna replied graciously, inviting her to spend carnival in Florence:

The present Your Ladyship sent of flowers and fruit from Genoa was most lovely, and rare in this season, and it was dear to me and I thank Your Ladyship, reminding you that if you would like to come here, to celebrate this carnival with us, it would be most pleasing to me...⁵¹

Fieschi-Appiani appears to have asked several favours over the course of her relationship with the Duchess, including her intervention with her brother in Bohemia:

I come to ask you for a grace and favour, and to that effect...the Captain Arcaria of Spain is coming with this letter, to whom I wish Your Highness to do me the favour of giving a letter to take with him to the Most Serene Viceroy of Bohemia, your brother, so that he may receive him with pleasure...⁵²

In this way, although subordinate to her husband and facing restrictions on her ability to wield power directly, the Duchess was able to exert informal influence to the benefit of those who wished to establish relationships with her, relationships which were mediated and maintained by gifts of food.

The use of food gifts to accompany propitiatory letters may have been prompted by the presence at court not only of the Duke and Duchess, but also other members of the ducal family who had their own households and patronage circles. So, for example, Giovanna faced competition from Bianca Cappello; her husband's sister, Isabella Orsini, Duchess of Bracciano, who resided in the original Medici palace on the Via

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., letter dated 18 January 1567.

⁵² 'vengo a supplicarla d'alcuna grazia e favore et per tale effetto vien ilCapitano Arcaria Spagnolo con questa mia, al quali desidero chi l'Altezza Vostra mi faccia grazia d'accompagnarlo con una lettera di favori appresso il Serenissimo Vicere di Boemia suo fratello perchè lo habbia per accetto...'. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo 1, p. 75 (letter dated 1 February 1568 [1569 in modern dating]).

Larga and was an active part of the Florentine 'scene'; Leonora, the young wife of Pietro de' Medici; and of course from Francesco himself, his father Cosimo, and his father's mistress and later wife, Camilla Martelli. This position is reflected in that of Barbara in Ferrara, where again her husband Alfonso's two sisters: Lucrezia and Leonora and his brother, the Cardinal Ippolito, resided, with their own courts and retinues, while in Mantua, Eleonora's mother-in-law Margherita Paleologa would have been a powerful centre of patronage until her death in 1566, having helped her son Guglielmo to govern during his younger years. While a letter might be read by more than one person, and its contents discussed within the court, the food gift acted as more public and directly visible evidence of the sender's homage⁵³ and was more efficacious than a letter containing a request, or even just grateful words, at magnifying the status of the recipient and strengthening court hierarchies. So, for example, the *Priori* and *Gonfaloniere* of Prato sent Giovanna small birds to celebrate the feast day of St John the Baptist, Florence's patron saint:

Most Serene Princess our sole and most honourable mistress.

To satisfy in part our community's dues as the most humble servant of Your Highness, we are sending on this feast day of St John, the present orators to greet you with forty pairs of *ortolani*...⁵⁴

These same *Priori* and *Gonfalonieri* later sent Bianca precisely the same quantity of the same kind of bird when she was Grand Duchess.⁵⁵ Their actions suggest that their gifts were intended to highlight the Duchess' position and were sent to her according to her rank, rather than as a marker of a close personal relationship. As I will discuss further on, different kinds of foodstuffs were selected according to the purpose they served, but in all cases, they were a valuable means of creating and sustaining networks.

Food Gifts and Piety

The examples analysed demonstrate how gifts of food could bind together superior and subordinate in an ongoing relationship and how they might be given in tribute to the power and authority of the superior, irrespective of the latter's individual identity. While some exchanges appear to have sought to highlight the intention of creating and

⁵³ Suzie Butters highlights the importance of witnesses in endorsing, reinforcing and disseminating the meanings and values attached to gifts. Butters, 'The Uses and Abuses of Gifts', (p. 264).

⁵⁴ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 23 June 1570.

⁵⁵ ASF, MdP 5927, p. 464.

fostering a long-term patronage relationship, by stressing the sender's willingness to serve, loyalty and devotion, on other occasions a more immediate favour was sought, as for example in the case of Leonardo Rabatti, or in the letter sent by the Bishop of Arezzo, who took the opportunity to ask her for a clock he wanted:

I am sending you some plums, the loveliest that my garden has produced, with the hope that they will please your soul and be to your taste: and on this occasion I remind you of the clock, which you were pleased to promise me over a year ago...⁵⁶

In the latter's case at least, however, although no further letters between the two have survived, there is considerable evidence to suggest that an ongoing relationship existed. Giovanna first met the Bishop Bernardetto Minerbetti on her journey down to Florence in 1565; he also accompanied her on her journey to Loreto,⁵⁷ and a letter from Paolo Odescalchi, 'Il Vescovo Odescalco', to Giovanna, accompanied the visit of Minerbetti's nephew to the Duchess. The letter explained that the nephew was to thank her for interceding with the Pope and obtaining for him an archdeaconate and clearly stated the relationship that existed between the Bishop of Arezzo and the Duchess:

Messer Donato must from now on enter into possession of that relationship of service that the Bishop of Arezzo has with Your Highness...⁵⁸

Therefore, even when the food gift was accompanied by a specific request, it appears that in most cases the patronage relationship was ongoing. However, there were certain occasions involving the exchange of food gifts when purely transient connections were sought. This type of gifting was a purely financial and one-off event. So far, the gifts of food analysed have involved members of the nobility or at least those in reasonably illustrious positions. However, comestible items were able to circulate at all social levels, and the duchesses might also receive gifts from the poor.

In the archive of Florence is preserved a list of receipts and claims belonging to Giovanna, mostly referring to the textiles and objects that she bought for herself and members of her court. However, interspersed amongst these, are pieces of paper that record certain amounts of money given to various people, some of which are in return for the donation of fruits of one kind or another. An example is the donation of one

⁵⁶ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 19 August 1574.

⁵⁷ ASF, MdP 6355/A, p. 7; MM 660, Fascicolo 16; Appendix 3, letter dated 18 April 1573.

⁵⁸ 'deve per l'avenire esso messer Donato entrare in possesso della servitu che ha esso monsignor d'Arezzo con Vostra Altezza.'. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 340.

scudo for the gift of sloes from an anonymous ‘poor man’.⁵⁹ These pieces of paper group together various acts of charity and are titled ‘Limosine’ (alms). They are part of the range of charitable activities in which the Duchess engaged. According to Arnoud Bijsterveld, the Greek and Latin fathers developed the idea of the redemptive value of alms and their effectiveness for the remission of sins. He points out Saint Augustine’s statement that prayers and alms by the living purified the souls of the dead and relates this concept to almsgiving and donations to religious institutions in the Middle Ages.⁶⁰ Giovanna’s actions can be seen in the light of this philosophy. By giving money, and far more than the food was worth (the ladies-in-waiting only received 2 *scudi* a month, the sculptor Giambologna 13 *scudi* a month),⁶¹ the Duchess was setting up a relationship that involved not only herself and the giver, but also God. These items were not accompanied by letters directing the Duchess on how to interpret the gift and the kind of relationship the giver wished to establish, instead they were physically accompanied by the poor man or woman in question and there was no expectation of the creation of an ongoing patronage relationship. A person of Giovanna’s standing could not be placed in a position of obligation towards someone whose social standing was so low. The gift relationship had to be transformed into another kind of relationship, more appropriate to the differences in status. Therefore Giovanna bestowed large amounts of money on the giver, who is never acknowledged by name, in a relatively short space of time (the receipts are written monthly, so it is safe to assume that the payments were made fairly swiftly), so transforming a potential ongoing patronage relationship into an act of charity, as indeed it is sometimes labelled in the receipts themselves: ‘Limosine’.⁶² By adopting this practice, although the relationship with each food-gift provider was temporary and swiftly ended, the Duchess sustained her relationship with another patron: God, who would reward her in Heaven for her charitable activities on earth.

Although Giovanna may not have wished to invest in ongoing relationships with the poor of Florence who offered her these small gift items, they were a useful way of highlighting and reinforcing her public image as a highly religious and charitable

⁵⁹ ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, p. 161r.

⁶⁰ Bijsterveld, ‘The Medieval Gift as Agent’ (p. 128).

⁶¹ ASF, MdP 616, pp. 274r, 273r.

⁶² Giovanna’s actions are similar to those of the Cardinal Ippolito d’Este on his journey to France. The Cardinal was expected to be generous by virtue of his position, and the inhabitants of the towns where he stopped could profit from such expectations. He received presents of wine and food, and ordered his footman to dispense coins to the poor and infirm, and it is likely that Giovanna too instructed a member of her household to hand out the alms to those who brought her gifts of foodstuffs. Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat*, p. 71.

Duchess, appropriate characteristics for a good Catholic noblewoman. That these qualities were perceived as eminently suitable for a person in her position is supported by a letter in the archives written by the nuns of the monastery of the Annunziata, near Pescia. They ask Giovanna to perform her duty as a good Christian and as a good Duchess and they plead with her to persuade her husband to allow them to import 150 sacks of grain from Francesco's territory. They say that they ask her because she 'has never failed to give her consent to all the favours that nuns have asked of her'.⁶³ Implicitly, to do so now would sully an otherwise untarnished reputation. The diarist Agostino Lapini reported at her death: 'everyone thought her almost a saint';⁶⁴ generously rewarding those who brought her small tributes was both a way of publicising this image and, as Roberto Sassatello wrote from Loreto: a 'mezo sufficientissimo a farsi facile la via dil Cielo'.⁶⁵

Conclusion

Food gifts could be a valuable asset in enabling courtiers and others to establish and maintain patronage relationships with the female consort and a vital means for the latter to both strengthen her networks of contacts and increase her prominence and status at court. Although such gifts also played a key role in male gift-giving strategies, they were particularly important to the Duchesses, as they were an economically viable and sufficiently informal tool for them to employ without fear of interference or competition by their husbands. The Duchesses' participation in this area of gift-giving demonstrates in particular the extent to which they were able to transcend their lack of official authority and use their access to gift-giving as a means of involving themselves in patronage, setting themselves up as important contacts and mediators with political figures of international importance, and shaping their public personas. However, the specific types of food that were exchanged could also carry particular messages which might add subtlety to the dialogues installed. The next chapter will examine how food can be understood symbolically. I will demonstrate that specific messages about rank and identity could be conveyed through the choice of particular foodstuffs.

⁶³ 'non ha mai mancata concederli tutte le gratie che gli sono state chieste dalle religiose...' ASF, MdP 5924, p. 13.

⁶⁴ 'da ognuno era tenuta mezza santa'. Lapini, *Diario fiorentino*, p. 198.

⁶⁵ ASF, MdP 5094, p. 96. See chapter six, note 32.

Chapter Nine

Food Gifts as Social Signifiers

Dietetics and the Hierarchy of Foods

The archival documents indicate that certain types of foodstuffs appear to be selected as gifts. There is a heavy preponderance of fowl of various kinds, fish, venison, artichokes and various types of fruit, both fresh and preserved, while items such as grains, breads, and what one might call dietary staples are absent.¹ This indicates that certain types of foods were acceptable as gifts, while others were clearly considered inappropriate. It is within this context that the types of foodstuffs given to Barbara, Duchess of Ferrara, by Francesco de' Medici, her brother-in-law can be examined. Barbara only ever, according to the documents that have reached us, received fruits of various kinds from her kinsman: plums of two different varieties, plus sugared plums and pomegranates. Amongst the letters which describe the arrival and reception of these differing goods, one extract is of particular interest. In it, the ambassador Canigiani writes:

Your Excellency having asked me last time about what might be appreciated from where you are, I remembered the *alafre* pomegranates and the *simiane* plums, as fruits appropriate for those who are ill...²

Barbara was almost permanently afflicted by ill health during her short life, finally dying of tuberculosis in 1572. This may have influenced the choices that were made in terms of what kinds of food to send as gifts. The Duke wished to maintain contacts with

¹ The regular allocation of foodstuffs to members of the household did of course include staples, and the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este distributed items such as flour to those in need, or at particular times, just as the nuns petitioned Giovanna for grain, however such actions can be seen as part of the duties of a good ruler towards those under his control, and it is unlikely that they would have given such items to individuals of their own social rank. Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat*, p. 31.

² See Appendix 5, Section Three, letter dated 25 September 1566.

the Este and he had a very wide range of foodstuffs to choose from. The reasons for sending her these specific fruits may have been prompted by their nomination as particularly suitable for ill persons in contemporary medical and nutritional theory, the publication of treatises on which was popular throughout the early modern period. These books propounded physician's opinions of what were good foods for individual complexions and physical make-ups, as well as the foods recommended for particular illnesses. Amongst these is a treatise on food and drink by Baldassare Pisanelli.³ He arranged his book according to categories of fruits, vegetables and meat products, and discussed each item individually, outlining its characteristics, and its positive and negative effects in terms of nutrition. One of his entries concerned pomegranates, about which he wrote that sour pomegranates (so-called *granate acetose*) were good for fevers, which is precisely what Barbara suffered from.⁴ Unfortunately, in his letters, Canigiani never precisely specifies what kind of pomegranates he is sending, but I would suggest that some knowledge of this peculiar quality of pomegranates may have prompted the gifts.

Gifts of plums and pomegranates were also suitable because of contemporary belief in a hierarchy of foods which paralleled human society, commonly known as the Great Chain of Being.⁵ According to this system, animals and plants as foods were ranked according to nobility, so that the noblest foods were particularly recommended for those whose social status was highest. The sky was linked to God's heaven while the earth was linked to base, animal instincts and following this ideology, those animals and plants which reached highest into the skies were therefore the noblest. Accordingly, birds were the noblest products of the animal world, as they soared in the skies and spent little time on the ground, and no time underground, while the lowest animals in the hierarchy were shellfish and other crustaceans that led lives attached to the rocks and under water. Following this logic, the least noble plants were those that produced an edible bulb, while fruit that grew on trees was suitable for a duchess.

We can apply this theory to an analysis of the purposes to which food gifts were put and the aims of those who sent them. The frequent deployment of birds as gifts may have been linked to their position at the top of the chain. The letter from Rabatti

³ Baldassare Pisanelli, *Trattato della natura de' cibi et del bere* (Rome: Bartholomeo Bonfadino, 1583). (First published in 1577).

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵ Allen J. Grieco, 'Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy', in *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 302-12.

previously mentioned, which accompanies the gift of sixty *beccafichi*,⁶ seems to follow in full the theory of both contemporary dietetics and of the Great Chain of Being. Going back to Baldassare Pisanelli's book, the entry on *beccafichi* describes them as an appropriate dish for lords, but to be avoided by peasants as they give the latter consumption.⁷ This is linked to contemporary ideas about digestion. Peasants were thought to be able to eat highly indigestible items of food, such as beans, because their life of hard manual labour made them sturdy and tough, and therefore with powerful digestive systems; aristocrats, instead, because of their leisurely lifestyle, had difficulty eating rough and fibrous foods and were advised to keep to light and easily digestible items, to avoid them sitting overlong in the stomach waiting to digest and there decomposing and poisoning the eater.⁸ According to dietetics, therefore, *beccafichi* were the perfect gift for Giovanna, and as the Great Chain of Being also puts birds up at the top, as I have shown above, so again, Rabatti's gift is suitable from this point of view: a noble gift for a noble woman.

Rabatti was a Captain and as such considerably lower in rank than Giovanna; he also appears to have had rather a short-lived relationship with the Duchess; he wrote to her on this occasion asking for a specific favour, but no other documents connected to him have survived in the archive. He may therefore have chosen to keep to the rules governing hierarchy and etiquette and avoid any risk of offence by presenting her with the type of gift that most efficiently symbolised membership of the elite. If we look at the other senders of small birds, we can notice some similarities with Rabatti's case. The Priors and Gonfaloniere of Prato sent *ortolani*, and as I have discussed their gifts were geared towards paying homage to the rank of duchess, rather than the individual herself, and so, again, a foodstuff that was a clear symbol of high status was chosen. Elsewhere, Domenico Rinuccini sent thrush, and on another occasion perfumed water and fruit; his position as a Captain and the clear differences in rank may again have influenced his food choices. Maria Nerli Soderini, also sent birds on her first approach to the Duchess, and she wrote in her letter:

⁶ See chapter eight, note 43.

⁷ Pisanelli, *Trattato della natura de' cibi*, p. 14: 'Fanno venire tisichi i Villani... Non si diano a questi tali, ma si servino per i buon compagni'. (They give peasants consumption...They should not be given to these people[i.e. peasants, as well as the ill], but let them be served to worthy companions).

⁸ The suitability of particular foods to different classes became increasingly ingrained during the sixteenth-century, as dietary characteristics gradually melded with the social connotations of foodstuffs. Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*, pp. 187-96.

I dare, with these few sentences, to remind you of my service and loyalty and also to give you a few partridges from these parts, unworthy of the merits of a Lady such as Your Highness, but it is not possible for people like myself to presume to give to people of such rank and greatness, as it would be like bringing water to the sea...⁹

This sentence encapsulates the ideology of this type of gift. Foodstuffs were the item of choice when wishing to show respect rather than impress the recipient, and small birds were by far the most appropriate type of food to give if the sender wished to stress the high social status of his patron, as they exhibited that level of meaning most strongly and coherently. Maria sent another gift on a later occasion to Giovanna, this time of fruit. Although fruit was also high in the perceived hierarchy, the tone of the letter, while containing similar sentiments, is less intent upon highlighting rank and position and it may be that Maria chose to send partridges upon her first approach to the Duchess, but felt able to give more personal gifts, based on alternative sets of values, which I will discuss below, once the relationship had been established.¹⁰

I would therefore argue that the hierarchical rules governing foodstuffs tended to be applied when the difference in status between giver and recipient was widest, when the giver wished to focus on their respect for the status of the recipient, and/or when their relationship with the recipient was being initiated. In other situations, the hierarchical rules do not appear to have been applied as rigorously. On many occasions the Duchesses did not send or receive foodstuffs that were high up on the Great Chain of Being. Eleonora sent a gift of *tartufoli*, or truffles to her daughter, the new Duchess of Ferrara.¹¹ Mushrooms were considered a dietary taboo by physicians due to the belief that they were generated from the exhalations and excrement of the earth.¹² Their location in the soil also placed them at the bottom of the hierarchy of foodstuffs, and yet, Eleonora sent them without fear of causing offence or her daughter's ill health. The Mantuan Duchess also sent artichokes to her husband, Guglielmo,¹³ despite the fact that they grew close to the ground and were thought to cause melancholy.¹⁴ Malacarne provides some further examples of the appreciation of such 'low' items, including the description by Francesco II Gonzaga of the mushrooms gathered in the royal park of

⁹ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 9 November 1571.

¹⁰ Ibid., letter dated 15 May 1576.

¹¹ Ibid., Section Two, letter dated 14 January 1583.

¹² Ken Albala, *Food in Early Modern Europe* (London: Greenwood Press, 2003), p. 39.

¹³ See Appendix 5, Section Two, letter dated 8 May 1566.

¹⁴ Hieronimo Sachetto, 'Galeno della natura et virtù di cibi, in Italiano. Tradotto dal Greco per H. Sachetto' (Venice: 1562), 59v.

Marmiolo.¹⁵ Clearly other considerations overruled the hierarchical position of these foodstuffs, such as costliness, fashion and rarity. It appears that many physicians were aware of this and they consequently set out in their treatises how supposedly inappropriate foods could be rendered innocuous for those of a delicate, noble digestion, by particular modes of preparation. So, for example in relation to artichokes, the sixteenth century translator of Galen explained how to counteract the melancholy effects of the vegetable:

Melancholy blood comes from the artichoke. And from the juices [comes], a thin and bilious blood. Therefore it is best eaten boiled, and if you eat it with oil, garum [a kind of fish sauce] and wine, then you should add some coriander. But if you cook it in a saucepan or a frying pan, then you shouldn't add the aforementioned ingredients.¹⁶

Despite these precautions, however, artichokes could still be problematic. Don Pietro, who appears to have frequently suffered from stomach troubles, put his digestion at risk by indulging in this particular vegetable, according to the Ferrarese ambassador:

Don Pietro is continuing to take the *acqua del legno* [lignum vitae – used to treat syphilis from which Don Pietro suffered] but it is thought that he will be ill eating every day five to six artichokes with 30 to 40 almonds, nor will he stop stirring up trouble, even though the Duke has been to reprimand him...¹⁷

Don Pietro himself also participated in gift-giving, sending his sister-in-law, Giovanna, tortoises and sloes from Pisa:

As I wish to go now to Livorno, I thought I should let Your Highness know, and at the same time send you some tortoises and plenty of sloes...¹⁸

In the latter exchanges, those involved were linked by family ties, where hierarchies were less evident and the exchanges could be less formal. These gifts, as I have discussed above, served to foster and maintain cordial relationships and smooth over any potential family rifts, and their food choices reflected these particular circumstances. However, these types of foodstuffs also appear as gifts from outside family circles.

¹⁵ Malacarne, *Sulla mensa del principe*, p. 114.

¹⁶ 'da lei si genera sangue malinconico. Et dal suco che in essa si contiene, sangue sottile e bilioso. Onde meglio sarebbe mangiarlo lessato, cosi' pero' che pigliandosi con olio, garo e vino, vi si giongesse coriandro. Ma se nei tegami si prepara, o nella patella, senza queste cose si debbe pigliare.' Sachetto, 'Galeno della natura et virtù di cibi', p. 59v.

¹⁷ See Appendix 3, letter dated 15 April 1576.

¹⁸ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 31 March 1574.

Regionality and Seasonality

The seasonality that limited the availability of certain foodstuffs and the relatively small quantities that could be made available even when they were in season could outweigh the position of these items on the Great Chain of Being and were major factors in making them appropriate, and indeed desirable as gifts. Such items did not have to be particularly exotic in order to gain this status. Being able to give foods that were not otherwise available to the receiver did not mean that they had to come from India or the New World, but just from another town or region in Italy. This is demonstrated by the letter from the Countess of Piombino. She sent Giovanna artichokes, peas and flowers, which she herself received from Genoa. She explained that the present might be pleasing to Giovanna, ‘come cosa, che la stagione di qui non lo comporta’, i.e. because such products are still not in season in Florence, where Giovanna resided.¹⁹ Her sentiments are echoed in Eleonora’s letter accompanying her gift of artichokes to Guglielmo, as she writes that she knows they are scarce where he is now,²⁰ and in Maria Nerli Soderini’s letter accompanying her gift of fruit to Giovanna:

having the opportunity of sending Your Highness some of the fruit that is not produced where I live but beyond the Alps, since they are a great novelty in this season...²¹

In all these cases, although they were not necessarily high on the Great Chain of Being, such gifts honoured the recipient because they demonstrated the effort that had been gone to in order to acquire such rarities, and they also reflected well on the giver who was able to obtain such items. Those who sent such gifts could be family members, but they could also be figures who either enjoyed a long-term relationship with the recipient or were of relatively high status themselves; we are no longer dealing with captains, but with princesses and countesses.

However, this strategy could cause embarrassment when requests for food products were not able to be accommodated. Eleonora wrote in a tone of slight reproof to her ambassador at the court of the Emperor, the Cavaliere Cavriani, in response to his request on behalf of the emperor of a type of apple called Lazaruoli, which she says he should know are not available now, being out of season. She sought to repair the

¹⁹ Ibid., letter dated 16 January 1567.

²⁰ See note 13.

²¹ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 15 May 1576.

potential diplomatic damage by sending instead some fruits that were in season, and bid Cavriani apologise to the Emperor on her behalf:

We praise your diligence in keeping us so well informed about those particulars that especially please us, as for example what you write about His Majesty's desire for these fruits of ours and especially Lazaruoli apples, which, however, the season having finished, as you should know, are no longer possible to send; however, in a couple of days time we will certainly send what fruit is currently available at this time, and you must give our apologies to His Majesty regarding the Lazaruoli.²²

This letter demonstrates that food gifts were dependent on factors such as season and region; however these were not the only potential issues; sixteenth-century inhabitants also had to contend with poor harvests and sudden scarcities of particular products. Barbara provides an example of this in a letter written to Eleonora in February 1567. In it she says that she has received news of the request by Guglielmo, Eleonora's husband, of *cevali* and salted fish from the area of Comacchio, part of the coastal territory of the Ferrarese duchy, and renowned for its fish products such as eels, but that she can only satisfy to a small extent his request as this year's produce was so meagre:

My carver Mirolo having told me that he had heard from Conegrani, who was here a few days ago, that the Duke wished to have some pickled *cevali* [a kind of fish] and some other kinds of salted fish from Comacchio, because of my desire to show on every occasion my goodwill towards His Excellency, I have taken these few *cevali* and some of the better items from the provisions made for the household and I am sending them to Your Highness, so that you may be pleased to send them to Casale as I trust you will do; however I must apologise if they are few, as those valleys have yielded a very poor harvest this year, and the provisions as a consequence so lacking that we have not this time been able to do more...²³

All the power and wealth in the world could not counter the vagaries of nature, and the duchesses were just as much subject to these as the common peasant, although far less likely to suffer hunger as a result.

Food Gifts and Provenance

The examples above demonstrate that items that were relatively low in hierarchical terms were sent to and from the Duchesses, but that these foodstuffs mostly circulated amongst people of a similar or equal social level and among family members. However,

²² Ibid., Section Two, letter dated 4 October 1569.

²³ Ibid., Section Three, letter dated 14 February 1567.

while the gifts I have mentioned so far were high up in the hierarchy, or exotic and hard to come by, this does not exhaust the list of comestibles that were circulated. More common and local gifts were also exchanged. Such gifts might be the proceeds of hunting, which, as Felicity Heal has pointed out, were suitable foodstuffs for members of the nobility as hunting and therefore the rewards of hunting were the very manifestation of membership of the elite.²⁴ However, venison, game and boar only tended to be distributed amongst family members, or members of the nobility. Although such foodstuffs symbolised high rank, it is unlikely that a figure such as Rabatti would have chosen to send the proceeds of hunting as such a gift would indicate membership of the elite on the part of the giver as well as the recipient and would lose the key message, that he instead wanted to highlight, of the difference in their ranks and his role as a supplicant. Other types of gifts, sent by those outside as well as within family circles could gain suitability by allusions to their home-made or home-grown status. The Cardinal of Altopasso made a very significant remark regarding the provenance of his gift: 'fruits from my garden in Pescia'.²⁵ Sending a gift that came from one's own garden may have been intended to allude to an additional level of intimacy in the relationship. If we read this gift and others like it as an attempt to declare or to reinforce a relationship of some kind, the statement that the product given comes from one's own personal garden and, by inference, was looked after and tended personally, is a useful way of increasing or highlighting the personal nature of the bond. There are echoes of this in the modern context of gift-giving: we give close friends and relatives jars of home-made jams, crates of apples etc. In this context it is significant that Giovanna sent the Pope *cotognato*, and various jams and pastes to the Emperor.²⁶ One might assume that these figures, of the highest rank possible, would be prime candidates for receiving partridges and other items that signalled high status. However, instead of, or as well as honouring the rank of the recipient, another purpose was sought. These particular foodstuffs were chosen in order to highlight the close and personal relationship Giovanna enjoyed with these figures. These gifts were publicly praised and discussed: 'l'ha laudate in tavola, pubblicamente...'²⁷ and the nature of the foodstuffs would have revealed to all onlookers the nature of the Duchess' relationship with the recipient. As a

²⁴ Heal, 'Food Gifts, the Household and the Politics of Exchange', (p. 58).

²⁵ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 30 October 1573.

²⁶ It is likely that she prepared these foodstuffs herself, or supervised their making. See chapter eight, note 32. Eleonora is known to have enjoyed making sweetmeats during her spare time in Innsbruck, ASM, AG 200, Fascicolo II, p. 153.

²⁷ See Appendix 5, Section One, letter dated 27 February 1572.

consequence the female consort was able to surmount her lack of institutional power, and successfully assert her presence on the international stage by publicly proclaiming the existence and nature of her relationships and contacts through informal, financially negligible but symbolically powerful gift-giving activities.

The Dangerous Gift: Poisoned Foods

The sections above have demonstrated that the nature of the foodstuff tended to change according to the relationship the giver enjoyed with the recipient, and according to the aims of the gift itself, whether this was to obtain a particular favour, to introduce oneself into a circle, to correctly honour the recipient according to their position, to stress closeness and highlight the personal nature of the relationship, or to mediate in a difficult political situation. The activities of giving, receiving and eating food are all aspects of rituals designed to manifest honour, power, wealth and amity; however, all this could be subverted by the dangerous gift – the poisoned food that killed rather than enriched the recipient, and signified the enmity rather than loyalty of the giver. From the Middle Ages onwards, death by poisoning was seen as a constant menace, and the favoured method of administration was adding it to the intended victim's food or drink.²⁸ By the fourteenth century princes and prelates were making sure that their foods were first tasted by others and were using a plethora of poison detectors, ranging from bezoar stones to pieces of unicorn horn;²⁹ and this continued into the sixteenth century when there were accusations of poisoning whenever anyone important died in Italy.³⁰

It appears that the traditional locus for poisoning, as described in treatises on poisons and antidotes,³¹ was the banqueting table, because, as they explain, this was the easiest place to poison someone without being discovered; however it may also have been selected because of its symbolic importance, and the dramatic effect of such a transgression against all the perceived norms, with particular Christian resonances linked to the Last Supper and the betrayal of Judas.

²⁸ Franck Collard, 'Le banquet fatal: la table et le poison dans l'occident medieval', in *La sociabilité à table: commensalité et convivialité à travers les âges*, ed. by M. Aurell, Olivier Dumoulin and Françoise Thelamon (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 1992), pp. 335–42 (p. 335).

²⁹ Unicorn horns were narwhal tusks, collected as unicorn horns up until the seventeenth century. Ibid., (p. 340). Bezoar stones were thought to have been extracted from the heads of snakes. Franck Collard, *Le crime de poison au Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), pp. 84–87.

³⁰ Georges Minois, *Le couteau et le poison: l'assassinat politique en Europe (1400-1800)* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1997), p. 38.

³¹ See for example Andrea Bacci, 'De venenis, et antidotis προλεγόμενα, seu communia praecepta ad humanam vitam tuendam, saluberrima ... De canis rabiosi morsu, et eius curatione', (Rome: 1586), p. 48.

Whether or not poisoning was frequent in reality, it was a constant topos in literature and enough of a psychological fear for accusations to be levelled. In Giuliano Fantaguzzi's *Caos*, the King of Spain poisoned several jars of tuna and other salted fish and sent it to Naples to poison the French, his enemies. After they had been vanquished, the fish was sold to various merchants and unknowingly taken and sold in Rome for the coming Lent. Almost immediately some 6,000 people died of the poison.³² Meanwhile, Mary Hollingsworth chronicled the events that took place in 1537, when, following the sudden death of the French Dauphin who had drunk a glass of cold water shortly after playing tennis with his secretary, the latter was tried, tortured and executed for having poisoning him.³³ As a consequence many treatises were written on the different kinds of poisons available and how to guard against them.

Part of the particular resonance and importance of gift-exchange came from the confirmation of friendship and trust between the two parties that the gift and its acceptance represented. I would suggest that one of the reasons why foodstuffs were such a popular choice for gifts despite their inability to demonstrate financial clout, artistic sensitivity or cultural sophistication, was because they could enhance and reinforce the relationship of amity and respect between the two actors involved, but also the reputation of the recipient. The acceptance, especially the public acceptance, of a gift of food from someone, whether a political rival or a member of your own citizenry, was a means of reinforcing bonds of trust and also reinforcing a vision of perfect political harmony. So, in praising the kings of Aragon, the Catalan Ramon Muntaner (1265-1336) wrote :

If a magnate, a knight, a prelate, a city-dweller, a villager, a town-dweller or another citizen of this country sends them [the ruling Aragonese dynasty] fruit, wine or other things, they eat them without hesitation; they also accept invitations in all their castles, villages, places and hamlets and they eat everything that has been prepared for them...³⁴

By eating all that was given to them, the Aragonese were engaging in a political public relations exercise. By accepting the foodstuffs without fear of poison they were asserting their rightful place as rulers who had no need, as usurpers or ill-governing

³² Giuliano Fantaguzzi, "'Caos': cronache cesenati del sec. XV", ed. by Dino Bazzocchi (Cesena, 1915), 204.

³³ Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat*, p. 115.

³⁴ 'Si un magnat, un chevalier, un prelat, un citadin, un villageois, un paysan ou un autre naturel de ce pays leur envoie des fruits, du vin ou d'autres choses, ils les mangent sans hesiter; ils acceptent d'ailleurs les invitations dans tous leurs chateaux, villages, lieux dits et hameaux et ils y mangent de tout ce qu'on leur a prepare...'. Aurell, 'Le roi mangeur' (p. 122).

princes might, of hiding from their populace or being suspicious of their gifts. By publicly accepting gifts, whether fruit from the poor or partridges from the rich, the Duchesses and the members of their families may have been investing in this kind of ideology, although, given the proliferation of treatises on poisons and how to avoid them, it is likely that in reality the gifts were tasted or checked before they reached the table.

Conclusion

From the evidence reviewed, Giovanna, Barbara and Eleonora appear to have participated fully in gift-giving activities. Their involvement sheds light on the relationships they fostered, their ambitions at court and the expectations courtiers and citizens had of them. The letters they received are also demonstrative of contemporary mores in the creation and maintenance of patronage relationships, and they illuminate the particular role the Duchesses played in acting as intermediaries between petitioners and their husbands. The types of foodstuffs given shed light on the particular aims gift-givers had, whether to request an immediate service, to keep lines of communication open in order to obtain future patronage, or to highlight a close personal relationship. Issues such as food transportation, seasonality and food-related regionalism were significant and held particular messages for the parties involved. The choices made also indicate that significant differences existed between the advice propounded in philosophical and medical treatises on acceptable foods and what was actually appreciated and consumed. There was considerable variance between the foods that were recommended by doctors and dieticians for a healthy life and those which were in fact consumed at banquets and given as gifts, even though they were not recommended, or openly condemned as both socially and nutritionally unacceptable. Nonetheless, at the same time, the sources do reveal that on particular occasions these texts would be heeded – when certain messages were intended, then the nutritional and hierarchical qualities of the foods were taken into account. As these two chapters have demonstrated, food operated as a facilitator, and a signifier in the creation and maintenance of a swathe of essential relationships and its low economic value, together with its ability to hold a wide range of symbolic meanings, made it the ideal gift for the female consort.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to illustrate the multiple ways in which material goods: textiles, clothing, foodstuffs, strengthened or made visible the position and activities of the female consort in the late sixteenth century. In her article, *Women as patrons and clients in the courts of Quattrocento Italy*,¹ Evelyn Welch pointed out that while the prince's court had received considerable attention, his spouse's household had been neglected. She argued that questions about female members of ruling houses had focussed on their activities as rulers and regents, rather than discussing the extent of their influence as consorts with limited public authority. My work has aimed to address precisely these aspects of the consort's life. In this thesis I have analysed the interrelationships between the male and the female court and the effects of particular court structures on the female consort's freedom of action; I have also examined the strategies she could adopt in order to work within these frameworks and extend patronage and construct networks of independent relationships. By focusing on the three Habsburg Archduchesses, Giovanna, Barbara and Eleonora I have been able to compare and contrast contemporary court practices and activities. They are a remarkable case study, sharing a common upbringing and cultural background, and marrying into three ducal dynasties at more or less the same time. These three families: the Este, Medici and Gonzaga were themselves linked by similar systems of government, by political rivalry, by common dependence on the Habsburg Emperor for confirmation of their present as well as future titles, and by family ties.

My study has demonstrated that despite these ties and the similarities between the duchies, these three women were exposed to very different experiences at court and that the rules that dictated the organisation of the female court and regulated the behaviour of the consort might differ between courts and indeed change over the course of the consort's lifetime. Although the sisters regularly asked each other to intercede

¹ *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, ed. by Letizia Panizza (Oxford: Legenda, 2000).

with their husbands on behalf of their respective clients, they were not able to rely on each other for support, indeed, they might even turn against each other, absorbing the competitive nature of their marital courts. This meant that their life cycles were far more dependent on their marital context and on their own resilience. While the authority of the ruler stemmed from his officially-designated position as sovereign, the consort's control, whether over provisioning, salaries, or the appointment of courtiers, was subject to variation according to the relationship between the ruling couple, the receipt of the dowry, the birth of a male heir, the presence of a dowager duchess, the financial independence of the consort, the relationship between their natal family and the family they had married into, and the existence of a rival mistress. These factors together with the wider political background also affected the consort's ability to take part in activities that reached beyond the confines of the court, such as ruling in her husband's absence, almsgiving, and even travelling both within the duchy and outside. My research has highlighted the fluidity of the boundaries that separated the male and the female court and the potential overlaps between the duchess' area of control and that of her husband, with consequent erosion of the duchess' autonomy. But while some scholars have argued that this was a positive aspect for women, allowing consorts to take on important roles as regents or advisors, the opposite was also true. It ensured that husbands could prevent their wives from taking on any public authority. As I have demonstrated, this was particularly visible in the case of the Florentine Duchess, Giovanna, whose problematic relationship with her husband Francesco de' Medici, and the consequences for her control over her courtiers and her ability to retain their loyalty, were vividly described by the Ferrarese ambassador Ercole Cortile. This series of ambassadorial reports has up till now remained almost completely unexplored; they are, however, a very rich resource and I would recommend further investigation, as they offer a great deal of information on daily life at the Florentine court and the activities not only of the male members of the ducal family, but the sisters, daughters and wives of the Medici as well.

As well as revealing the stresses and difficulties that could affect the consort's position at court, my analysis has also shown that there were certain key strategies to which the female consort had access, and through which she might construct successful relationships with her courtiers and with others outside the court. The principle amongst these was her role as intercessory agent. The Duchesses turned to their husbands, to each other, to their relatives in Innsbruck and Vienna, and to other powerful figures with

whom they were able to maintain successful relationships, in order to promote and establish themselves as influential patrons. Networks of useful contacts upon which the consort might rely were therefore the key factor that determined her success or failure. Her ability to establish and sustain these relationships was particularly important because of her identity as a potentially threatening foreigner. The female consort rarely remained in her native court or even in her own country at her marriage; instead she travelled to a foreign court and joined her husband's family, where she was expected to conform and swiftly integrate into her new surroundings. I have demonstrated that, as a foreign bride, she was able to take some of her companions with her to form her new court, but she also had to construct relationships with the courtiers that were assigned to her by her husband, as well as with the important figures at court, and outside, with whom she was not yet acquainted. However, while relationships were the key to her success, her lack of an institutional framework within which to operate effectively meant that access to means of establishing and maintaining them was not necessarily straightforward. The consort was unable to establish patronage relationships and wield influence through the same channels as her husband. She was frequently unable to appoint directly to positions both within court and within the broader duchy; she did not exert full control over the salaries of her courtiers, and her financial independence was constantly under threat. Her voice was not heard in the promulgation of laws, in declarations of war or in the regulation of taxes, she did not set foot in the council chamber, except when representing her absent husband, and in some cases, as I have demonstrated with Giovanna de' Medici, not even then. She therefore had to find alternative means of highlighting her position, establishing herself at court and securing useful contacts. My thesis has identified and examined the ways in which she could employ material culture to operate within this framework.

Despite the limitations that could be imposed upon her freedom of action, the duchess was responsible for certain aspects of life at court. She was expected to play a key role in tending to her courtiers, especially her ladies-in-waiting, and she was also, although subject to variations between courts, expected and allowed to operate in particular arenas, such as the Church and charity. The female consort therefore played a double role, identifying both as subordinate wife and as head of her own court. While this position was problematic, at the same time her double identity did give her access to certain means of exercising agency and constructing networks of relationships, both at court and on the international stage. I have demonstrated that in certain areas in which

the female consort enjoyed a degree of freedom, objects could be used to make socio-economic and political statements and to construct visible networks with courtiers, key political figures, and the wider populace. I have argued that in order to uncover information on women and to comprehend female access to power, it is necessary to broaden the investigative outlook to include documentation on activities that have up till now been seen as peripheral to the world of politics and international relations. My research has focussed on two types of material good in particular: textiles and foodstuffs and I have analysed their deployment by the Duchesses as both objects for their own consumption, and as gifts for others. My analysis has revealed modes of operation that functioned alongside the official world of government and political negotiation, and in which both men and women participated. Mary Hollingsworth and Suzie Butters, amongst others, have demonstrated that men were active participants in gift-giving and regularly deployed material goods in order to strengthen and sustain relationships and enhance their own position. They used their own dress and the clothing they provided to members of their courts, for example the liveries worn by members of the ducal household, to send out specific messages, and they also sent and received food gifts. However, not only did the Dukes also have access to a much wider range of avenues through which they could engage in patronage and assert their identity, they were also able to establish their control over far broader sections of society. I demonstrated in chapter seven the difficulties Giovanna faced in her attempts to impose her own dress style in Florence. We can compare this with Cosimo's sumptuary legislation, and his enforcement of the *lucco*, the long cloak that had been a staple in the Florentine wardrobe during the Republic, but which had since fallen out of fashion, for all those who wished to hold office at court.² The consort also faced restrictions that were not placed upon her husband in terms of what was considered suitable and acceptable in her gift-giving activities, and she could not compete with his greater economic resources. Nonetheless, although the consort had fewer resources at her disposal, and faced greater restrictions, objects could provide a means of establishing her position at court, asserting her own identity, independently from the duke and his family, and creating relationships based on mutual benefits and loyalty with her courtiers. These strategies also enabled her to participate in international politics despite the restrictions placed upon her by her position.

² Currie, 'The Fashions of the Florentine Court' (pp. 58-59).

The female consort's deployment of the opportunities offered by material culture was exemplified by one of the Duchesses in particular: Giovanna, who faced problems in her relationships that threatened to effectively sabotage her role as head of her own court and nullify any clout her position and rank as duchess might have. The Florentine Duchess came into increasing conflict with her husband over the course of her marriage, due in part to the presence of Francesco's mistress Bianca Cappello and her position as a rival patron. In chapters six and seven I demonstrated that Giovanna made repeated use of her access to a clothing allowance and her control over the acquisition of textiles for herself and her ladies in order to position herself as a patronage figure in the Florentine commercial world, to draw attention to her identity as a member of the powerful Habsburg dynasty, to highlight her status as Duchess, and to sustain her courtiers' loyalty. She also used textiles as gift objects in order to construct networks of contacts with members of other courts, from Munich and Vienna to the Papal Curia, as well as with important centres of religious cult, such as Loreto. Giovanna was able to employ her access to and possession over clothing to visually express her feelings of conflict and ambiguity over her situation in Florence. Her clothing choices contrasted with those of her sisters and especially with her sister Eleonora, whose dress, I have demonstrated, reflected a different situation at court, and an alternative deployment of material culture to emphasise certain aspects of her identity and position which she wished to highlight, namely her piety and obedience to her husband.

As well as illustrating the ways in which the female consort could employ material objects to shape her public persona, and reach out and make connections with those around her, this thesis has also demonstrated the ways in which others could employ material culture in order to initiate and maintain relationships with her. The frequent gifts of foodstuffs that the three Duchesses both sent and received provide evidence of contemporary perceptions of their influence, the networks they were able to cultivate and the value they had as potential intermediaries with those who held official authority, whether husbands or male relatives. My analysis of the foodstuffs that were exchanged has also demonstrated the range of meanings that these items could carry and their potential as a tool by which the sender could nuance and highlight different aspects of the relationship they enjoyed or wished to enjoy with the recipient of their gift. The archival documentation reveals that there was a shared language of foods that operated across linguistic and cultural divides and particular foodstuffs could be employed to send different messages, whether to highlight the high rank of the recipient, or the

intimacy of the relationship established. I have demonstrated that gifts of food were an essential tool at the female consort's disposal as they were both informal and economically accessible; as a consequence they were not given on official occasions or when it was necessary for the male ruler to demonstrate his power and status, and the consort therefore enjoyed greater liberty to send and receive gifts independently. Furthermore, their low material value made them effective gifts for those lower in the social hierarchy to send to the Duchesses. Those who sought her patronage could therefore do so without risking any offence or a charge of subverting the proper system of patronage, as the ephemeral nature of foodstuffs expressed respect rather than providing any tangible benefit that might embarrass the Duchess.

This thesis has demonstrated that an elite woman's control over certain goods, even those which were of limited financial value, allowed her to establish and make visible networks that crossed geo-political boundaries and included such key figures as Pope Pius V, with whom Giovanna enjoyed a thriving patronage relationship punctuated by the exchange of gifts and favours. It provided her with a means of attracting the support of her household, for example by providing expensive clothing for her ladies-in-waiting, and a tool through which to visually impose herself on the court stage, for example by dressing herself and her ladies in similar colours and in eye-catching materials, and by adopting stylistic traits that reminded viewers of her status and ancestry. By operating through gift-giving and consumption, she was able to participate in political negotiation alongside her new family, for example by engaging in gift dialogues with the wives of key allies, but she was also able to challenge her husband, while remaining within the boundaries of correct behaviour, as Giovanna's pilgrimage to Loreto exemplifies. The Duchesses were keenly aware of the importance of their public personas and engaged in campaigns aimed at moulding such perceptions, for example through almsgiving. They also employed material culture to engage in self-promotion, for example by sending on to others and publicising the gifts they had received. These were all strategies through which the consort could operate unofficially and sustain the networks of contacts she needed in order to extend informal influence. However, at the same time as highlighting the manifold ways in which the Duchesses could manipulate and take advantage of the material culture available to them, my research has also demonstrated the ultimate lack of control the female consort had over her own person and her court and the limits that could be imposed upon her access to influence. Her position as subordinate wife meant that, despite her status as head of her

own court, she was crucially dependent upon her husband's *beneplacito* for any effective access to power. She might be able to create networks of contacts and use gift-giving to impress and attempt to extend influence, but her situation would ultimately be untenable if she was unable to rely on the essential support of the Duke. He could cut off or restrict her allowance, which, unless she had significant independent means of her own, and few consorts did, would significantly impact on her ability to acquire and make use of material culture, and he could intervene directly in her court, sacking or sending away her courtiers; he could even, as occurred in the case of Barbara's predecessor, Renée of Ferrara, imprison the Duchess herself. He might incur disapproval or condemnation for his actions – the Venetian ambassador Vincenzo Tron commented on Guglielmo's unjust actions in not treating his wife appropriately, and Giovanna's brothers, especially the Archduke Ferdinand, complained at Francesco's conduct towards his wife, but, as Barbara's husband, Alfonso was reported as saying, in rebutting the Jesuits' attempts to gain influence with the Duchess: 'he wished to govern her in his own way'.³ The female consort could therefore access influence, she could create and sustain networks of patronage, and she could use material culture to achieve these goals, but such activities could not afford her effective protection when key relationships failed – she was ultimately under male control.

The issues I have raised regarding these three Duchesses are relevant to court studies across early modern Europe and my research contributes to current discussions about female agency, and the extent to which women might influence those around them informally. My investigation of the consorts' deployment of material culture provides a new means of documenting and understanding the relationships they constructed, their position at court, and the extent to which they were able to use objects to send out visual messages, to challenge or support. The evidence I have uncovered highlights the wealth of information contained in archival documentation such as account books and receipts that are only now beginning to be explored and mined for data that can help us to reconstruct the lives and activities of women who did not rule but could nonetheless be active political, economic and cultural participants at court and outside. Giovanna had been mostly ignored by historians, yet my research has demonstrated that she was far more than a 'good mother, as she was an honest and

³ Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, p. 301.

affectionate wife...’,⁴, as the early twentieth-century historian Gaetano Pieraccini described her. While I have uncovered much of the documentation relating to the Florentine Duchess in the Italian archives, there is still a great deal of material to be explored in the archives of Munich, Innsbruck and Vienna. This documentation, like that in Florence, is almost all unpublished and further exploration of these resources is to be recommended in order to obtain a more detailed understanding not only of this particular woman but also of the position of the female consort in Europe. As a Habsburg Archduchess who was related to the major dynasties in Europe, Giovanna offers a valuable opportunity to analyse the existence and proliferation of the networks that female consorts might construct and the means by which they could maintain them. By tracing the paths of her letters, other women’s networks can be uncovered and maps of contacts can be drawn across Europe that both ran alongside and joined together with the networks set up by men. Further archival research in the Austrian and Vatican archives is also needed to follow up on the contacts Giovanna made and determine the extent to which she was able to employ such networks to influence events, such as the crusade against the Turks organised by Pius V. There is still much research to be done on the role of the non-governing female consort, and the extent to which she might operate alongside or against her male counterparts in issues of international negotiation and allegiance. Further analysis of the gift networks that were set up across Europe by these women would provide valuable insight into a much-neglected area.

⁴ ‘buona madre, come fu moglie onesta ed affezionata al marito...’. Gaetano Pieraccini, *La stirpe de’ Medici di Cafaggiolo. Saggio di ricerche sulla trasmissione ereditaria dei caratteri* (Florence, 1924), II, p. 130.

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Illustrations



Figure 1 Portrait of Barbara von Habsburg (Barbara d'Austria), by Francesco Terzio, 1565. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 2 Portrait of Johanna von Habsburg (Giovanna d'Austria), by Francesco Terzio, 1565. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 3 Portrait of Alfonso II d'Este, by Girolamo Sellari (known as Girolamo da Carpi). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.



Figure 4 Portrait of Francesco I de' Medici, circle of the *studiolo* artists, c.1565-69.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



Figure 5 Portrait of Eleonore von Habsburg (Eleonora d'Austria), by an unknown artist, 1555. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 6 Portrait of Guglielmo Gonzaga, by an anonymous artist. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 7 Portrait of Bianca Cappello, by Scipione Pulzone, c.1585. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 9 Photograph of the pelvis and lower spine of Giovanna d'Austria, showing a severe scoliosis of the spine and deformity of the pelvis, photo by the Divisione of Paleopatologia, University of Pisa.

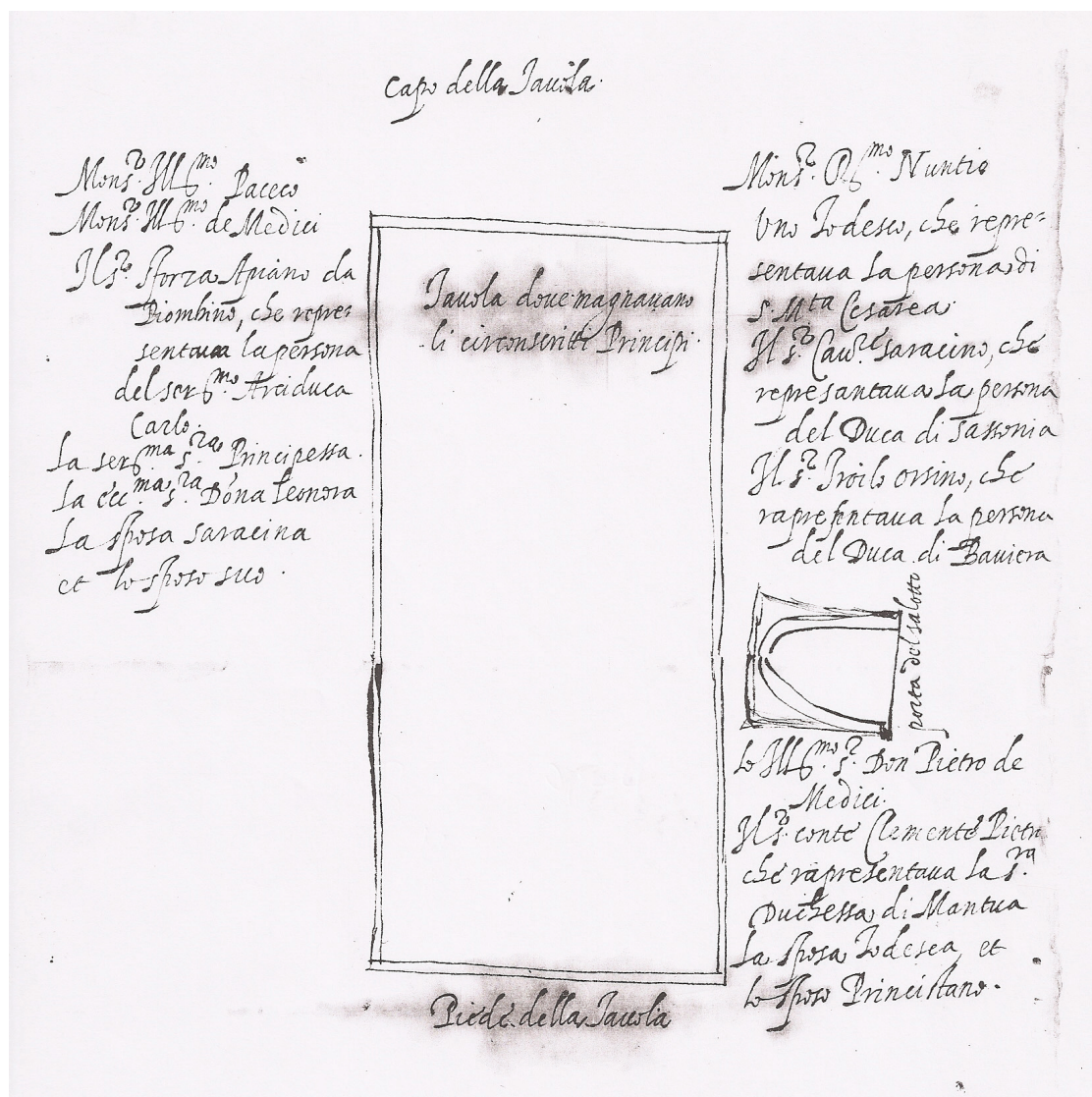


Figure 10 Drawing of the seating arrangements for the wedding of the Baron von Sprinzenstein. See Appendix 3, letter dated 26 October 1573.

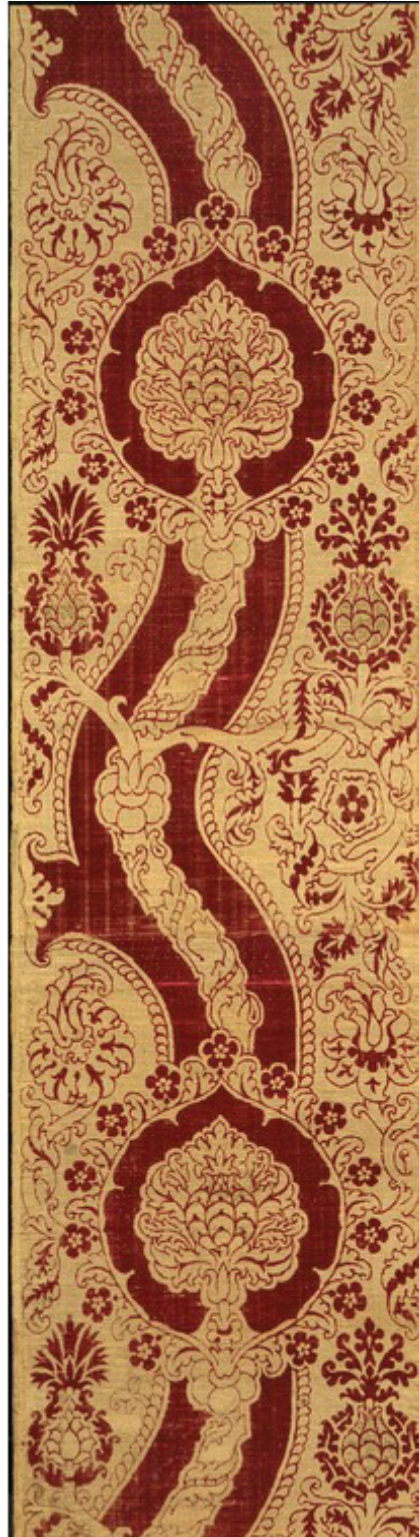


Figure 11 Velvet cloth of gold with loops of silver-gilt thread. End of the fifteenth-beginning of the sixteenth century. Italian. Such materials could be used both as wall-hangings and as dress textiles. Victoria and Albert Museum, 81-1892.



Figure 12 Liturgical parament. Cut and patterned velvet on a gold tabby background with three rectangles of velvet with two heights of pile. Possibly Spanish, end of the fifteenth-beginning of the seventeenth century. Image from Poli, Doretta Davanzo (ed.), *Seta & Oro: la collezione tessile di Mariano Fortuny* (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1997), p. 18.



Figure 13 Chasuble. White satin with an extra weft thread of silver gilt forming the pattern. Italian. 1675-1700. Image from Poli, Doretta Davanzo (ed.), *Seta & Oro: la collezione tessile di Mariano Fortuny* (Venice: Arsenale Editrice, 1997), p. 42.



Figure 14 Doublet and breeches. White satin, stamped and pinked, decorated with braid and silk ribbons. English. 1630-1640. Victoria and Albert Museum, 348&A-1905.



Figure 15 Portrait of Eleonore von Habsburg (Eleonora d'Austria), by Jakob Seisenegger, 1536. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 16 Detail of a cope showing three different types of bouclé effects in gold thread. Metal threads were used to decorate all types of textiles and gold loops were particularly prized, as they increased the value of the clothing considerably. Florence. Mid sixteenth century. Image from Orsi Landini, Roberta, and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005), p. 185.



Figure 17 Detail of the portrait of Giovanna d’Austria and her son Filippo, by Giovanni Bizzelli, c.1586, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. The painting reveals the quantity of embroidery and accessories, such as the small pearls that are sewn onto the dress, that could be employed in decorating a single item of clothing. Image from Orsi Landini, Roberta, and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005), p. 43.



Figure 18 Frontal. Red satin background with embroidery in different coloured silk thread and silver-gilt and silver wire. End of the sixteenth century. Image from Ciatti, Marco (ed), *Drappi, velluti, taffetà et altre cose: antichi tessuti a Siena e nel suo territorio* (Siena: Nuova Immagine Editrice, 1994), p. 131.



Figure 19 Portrait of Giovanna d'Austria and her son Filippo by Giovanni Bizzelli, c.1586. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

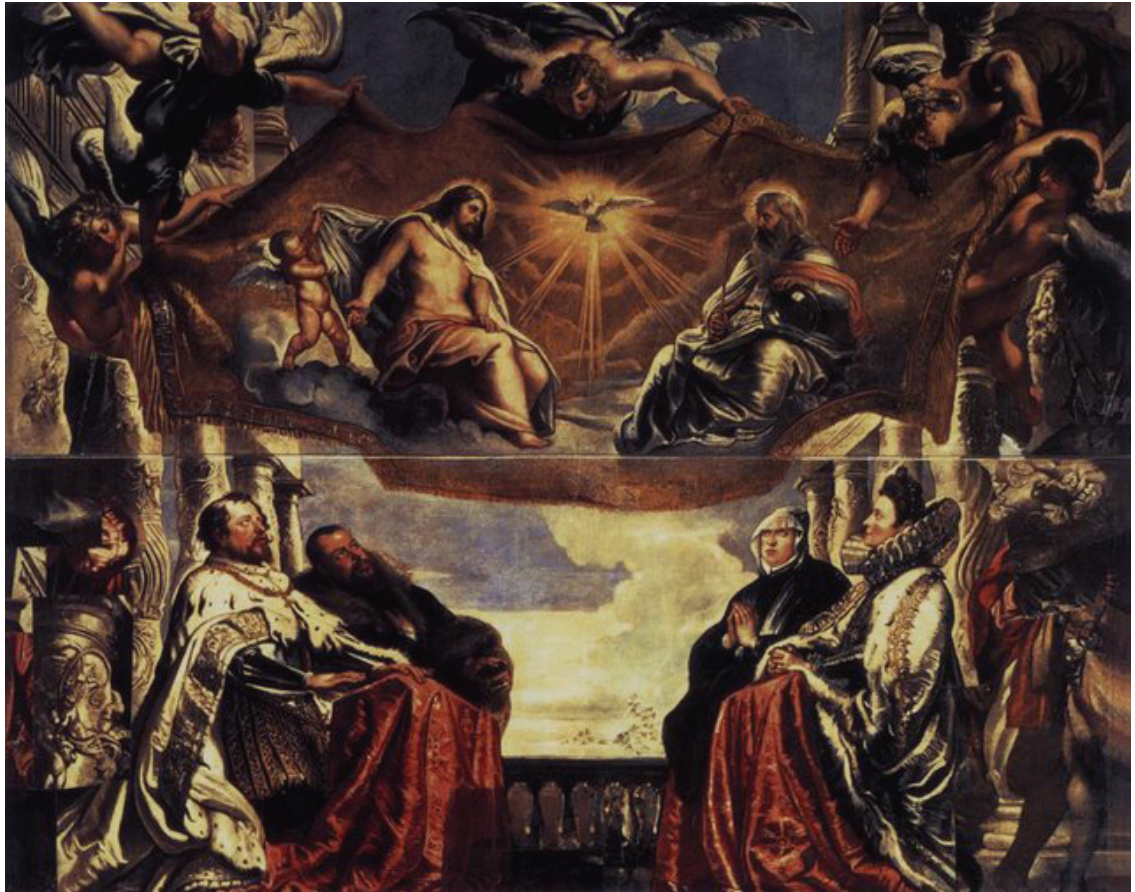


Figure 20 The Gonzaga family worshipping the Holy Trinity, by Peter Paul Rubens, 1604-1605. Palazzo Ducale, Mantua.



Figure 21 Portrait of Giovanna d'Austria by Alessandro Allori and workshop, 1565-1570. Giovanna is wearing a petticoat in gold gauze with a matching overgown of silver gauze, both brocaded in squares. Museo degli Argenti, Florence.



Figure 22 Portrait of Maria, Duchess of Bavaria, by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen. 1577.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 23 Portrait of Anna of Austria, Queen of Spain, by Anthonis Mor van Dashorst, 1570. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 24 Portrait of Maria of Spain, Holy Roman Empress, by an anonymous artist, before 1557. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Figure 25 Portrait of a young woman, by Alessandro Allori, 1560-1570. Galleria Palatina, Florence.



Figure 26 Portrait of a young woman, by Alessandro Allori, location unknown, 1580-1590. The clothing is typical of Florentine fashion. Image from Orsi Landini, Roberta, and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005), p. 123.



Figure 27 Women of the Cini family, detail of the predella of the panel painting by Alessandro Allori, *Christ and the adulteress*, 1577. Frescobaldi-Cini chapel, Church of Santo Spirito, Florence. Image from Orsi Landini, Roberta, and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005), p. 109.



Figure 28 Portrait of a young woman, by Katharina van Hemessen, 1550-1560.
Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore.

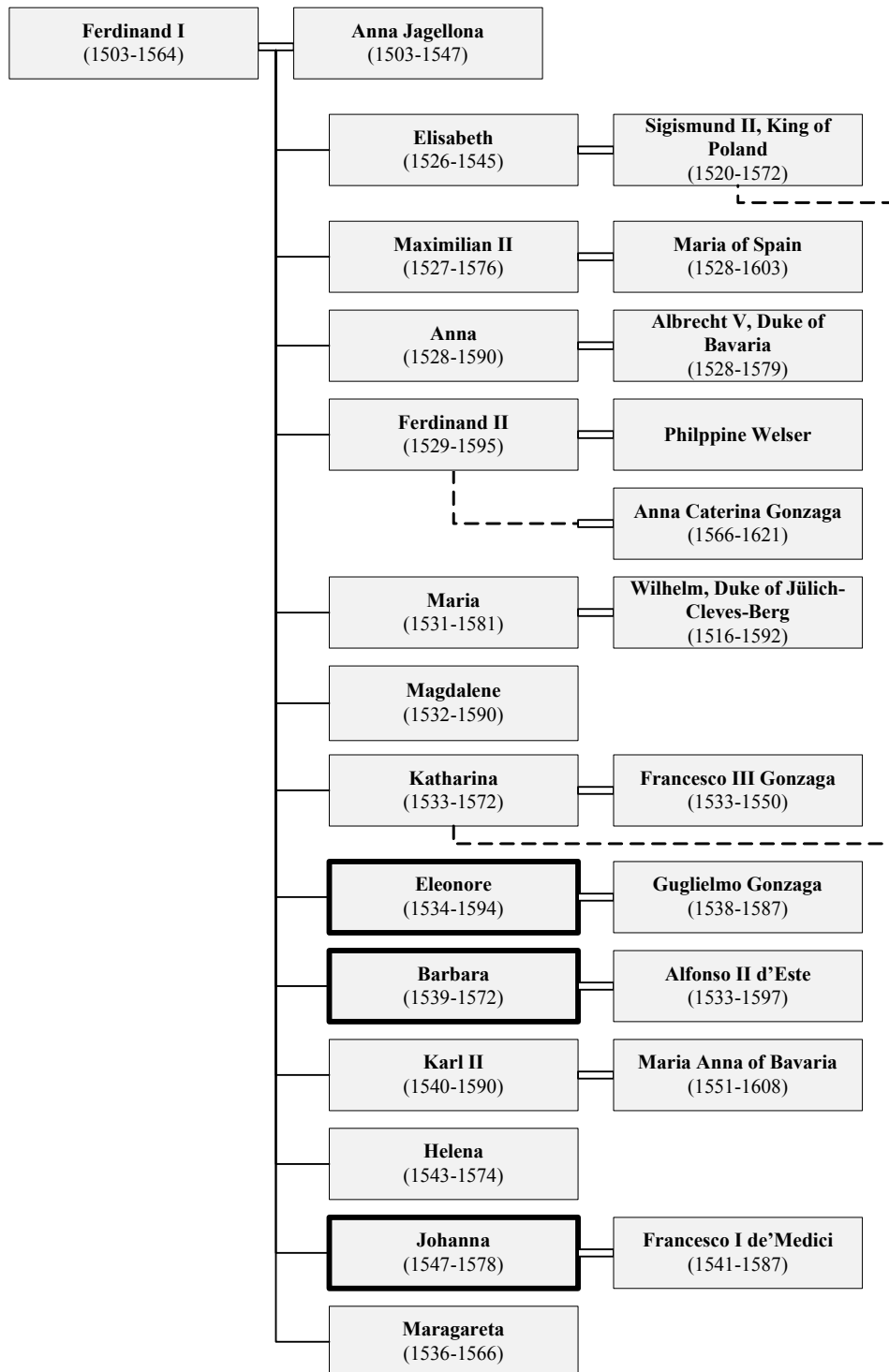


Figure 29 'Pierre de Moucheron and his wife, Isabeau de Berbier with their children in Antwerp', attributed to Cornelius de Zeeuw, 1563. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

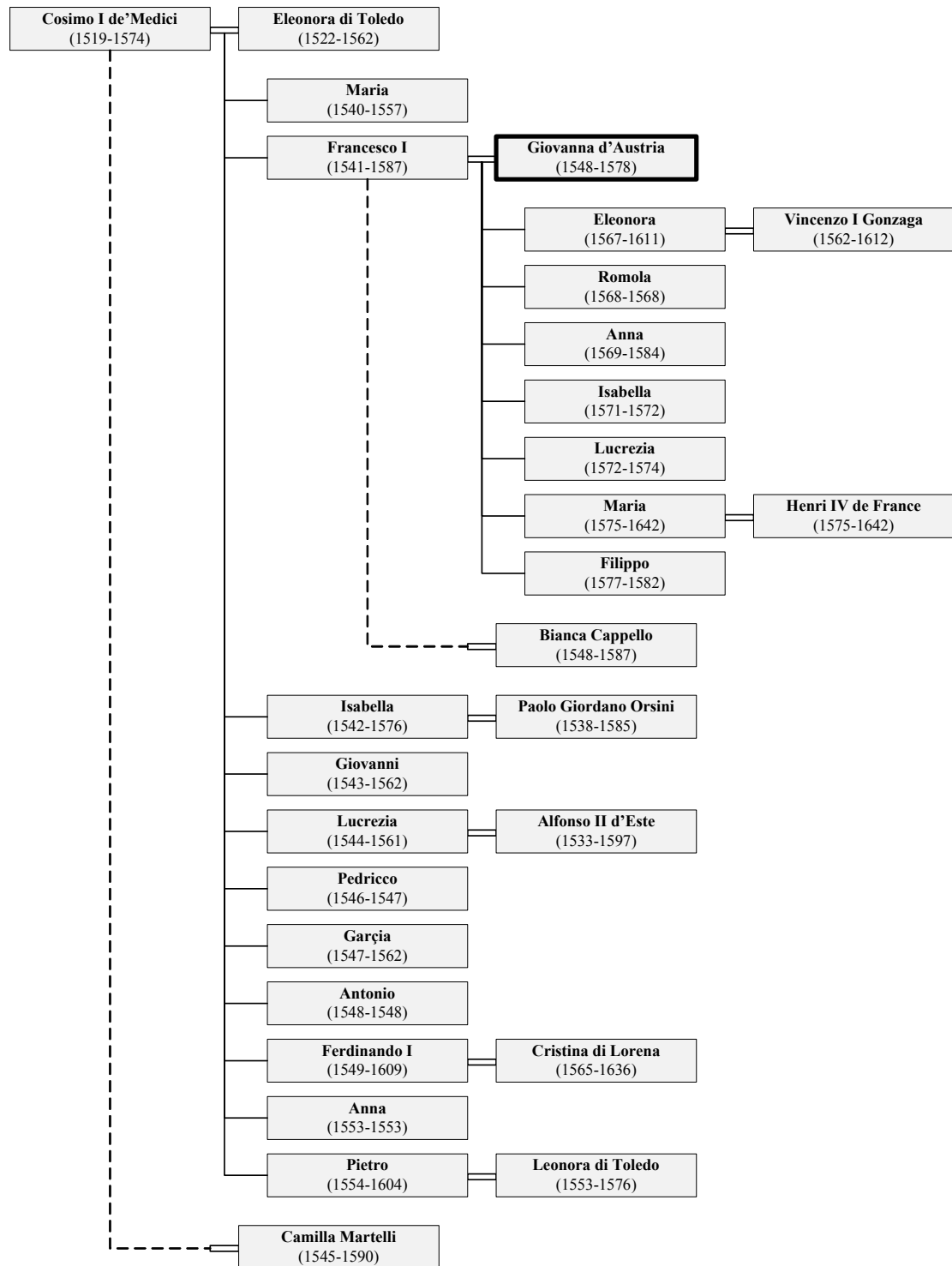
Appendix 1

Family Trees

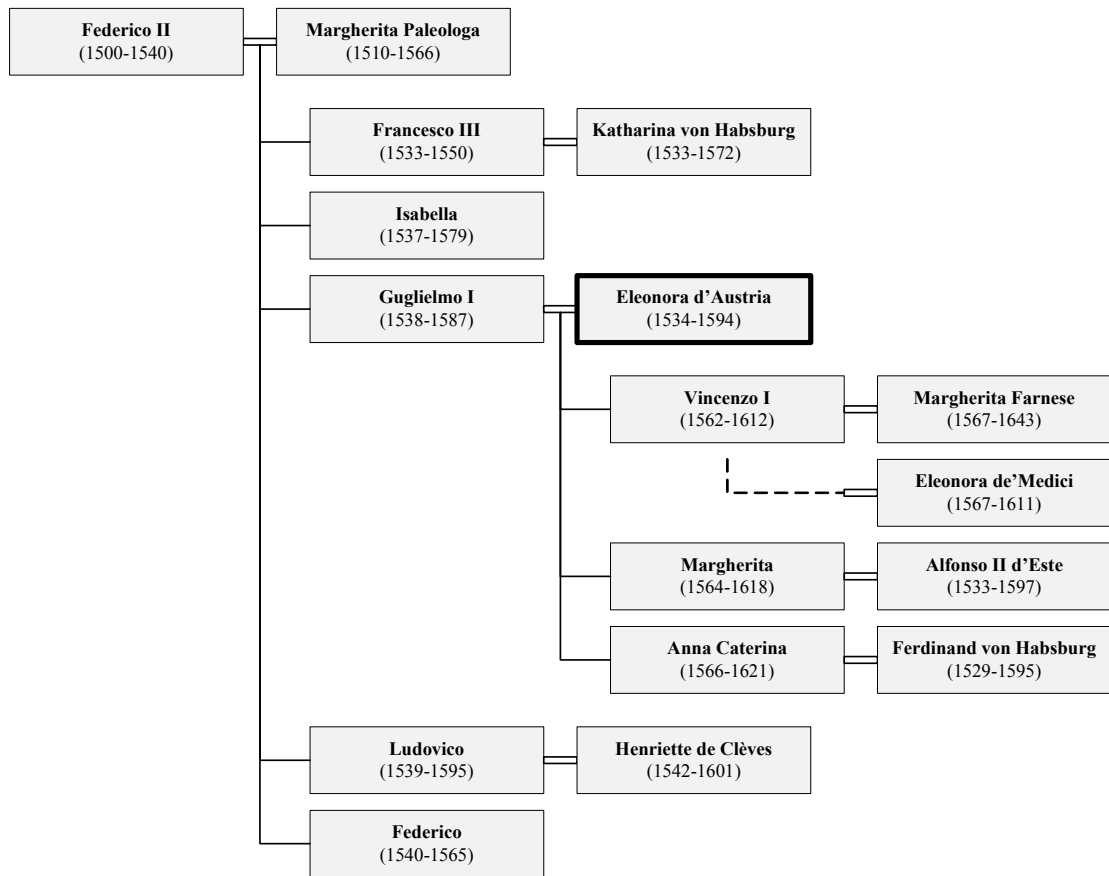
Habsburg Family Tree



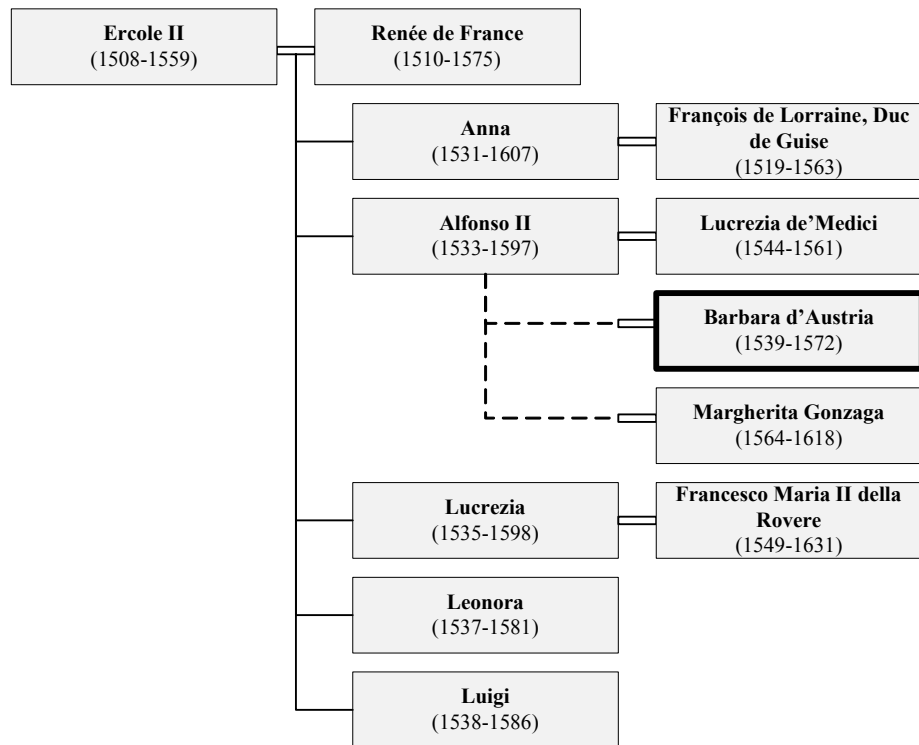
Medici Family Tree



Gonzaga Family Tree



Este Family Tree



Appendix 2

Wills

Last Will and Testament of Barbara von Habsburg, Duchess of Ferrara
Archivio di Stato di Modena, Archivio Segreto Estense, Sezione Casa e Stato
Serie: Documenti Riguardanti la Casa e lo Stato
Busta 358, Fascicolo 37/1990, part 1990/9, p.1r-6v.

Nota bene: all abbreviations have been expanded where known. All original spellings have been maintained. The punctuation has been modernised.

Yhs.

Testamentum Serenissimae Barbarae de Austriae.

In Christi nomine amen. Quoniam mors omnia aequat. Incirco Serenissima Regina Barbara de Austria nata olim foelicissimae memoriae invictissimi Imperatoris Ferdinandi uxor Illustrissimi et Excellentissimi Domini D. Alfonsi secundi Estensis Ducis quinti Ferrarie et [?] sana Dei gratia mente et intellectu, licet corpore infirma, nollens intestata decedere sed testari intendens per huc presens sui ultimum testamentum nuncupatum di se ac bonis suis ut infra disposuit ordinavit videlicet.

In primis anima sua omnipotenti Deo humiliter commendavit.

Haeredem vero suum universalem, tam in eius dote, quam in omnibus alijs suis bonis mobilibus, immobilibus et sese moventibus, iuribus et actionibus, praesentibus et futuris, ubicunque consistant et esse reperiantur, instituit et esse voluti praefatum Illustrissimum et Exellentissimum Dominum Don Alfonsum Ducem Ferrarie eius virum. Cum onore tamen, quo eum gravavit, solvendi et adimplendi omnia et singula ea legata quae, et personis quibus, declarabit et exprimet, nomine ipsius serenissimae Ducissae Testatricis, Reverendus pater Dominus Laurentius Hermanutius eius confessor, cui voluit credi et eius verbo stari. Iubens id omne observare et adimplere quod ab eo declaratum fuerit circa personas legatariores et quantitates legatorum, in omnibus et per omnia, ac si ab ea in praesenti testamento fuisset de verbo ad verbum expressum et specificatum.

Et hoc est suum ultimum testamentum et sua ultima voluntas quod et quam valere voluit iure testamenti, et si eo iure valere non posset, voluit valere iure codicillorum,

donationis causa mortis, et iure cuiuslibet alius ultimae voluntatis quo magis et melius valere poterit, firmiterque tenere.

Cassans, irritans et annullans omne aliud eius Testamentum et omnem aliam eius ultimam voluntatem et omnem scripturam tam publicam quam privatam desuper confectam, et si in ea adessent clausole derogatorie quibuscumque verbis formate et etiam donationes, aut quicquid aliud quo caveretur posterius testamentum non valere nisi de eo fierit specialis et individua mentio, quorem dixit non habere memoriam, et si eor[?] recordantur ipsa omnia expresse revocant eisque omnino derogant, prout in genere revocavit et derogavit, quem vult et intendit praesens testamentum omnibus alijs eius ultimis voluntatibus praeferre et omnino praevalere. Et sui ut supra disposuit et ordinavit omni quocunque meliori [?], via, iure, forma et causa quibus magis et melius ac validius fuere potest.

Actum fuit a praefata Serenissima Testatrice praesens subscriptum Testamentum et iussu eius a me notario [?] lectum et publicatum, Anno a nativitate Domini nostri Iesu Christi millesimo quinquagesimo septuagesimo secundo Indutione quintadecima, Die quinto mensis Iunij. Ferrarie in curia ducale in camera cubiculari praefatae Serenissimae Testatricis, praesentibus testibus ad hoc specialiter adhibitis, vocatis et ore proprio ipsius Testatricis rogatis:

Illustre comite Hectore Mirollo q. Illu. co. Baldasseris habitator Mantuae

Magnifico Domino Scipione qui magnifici D. Nicolai Bonlei nob. Ferr.

Domino Andrea q. Leonardi Pauhofer de Ispruc valetto de camera praefatae Serenissimae Testatricis

Domino Marco Antonio filio D. Constantini de Cavedalis de Salo, hostiario camerae praefatae Serenissimae Testatricis

Bolfgango Stegher de Ratemberg q. Christophori credencerio praefatae Serenissimae Testatricis

Domino Nicola Savana q. De Io. mariae cive Ferrariense et

D. Dominico Zaffarino q. D. Petri notario publico in cive ferrariae

Ego Antonius Colornius q. D. Hieronj publicus apost. avit. Notarius et cives ferrariensis subscriptis interfui eaque rogatus scripsi et in fidem promissory hic me subscripsi, signumque meum tabollionatus consuetum apposui.

Declaratio legatorum factorum a Serenissima Barbara de Austria per eius confessorem facta

In Christi nomine Amen. Cum Serenissima Regina Barbara de Austria, nata olim foelicissimae memoriae invictissimae Imperatoris Ferdinandi, uxor Illustrissimi et Exellentissimi Domini Don Alphonsi secundi Estensis Ducis quinti Ferrariae, suum ultimum condiderit testamentum rogatum per me notarium infrascriptum, in quo haeredem universalem instituerit praefatum Illustrissimum Dominem Ducem cum onere tamen quo eum gravavit, Solvendi et adimplendi omnia et singula ea legata quae et personis quibus declarabit et exprimet nomine ipsius Serenissimae Dominae Testatricis Reverendus Pater Dominus Laurentius Hermanutius eius confessor, cui voluit credi et eius verbo stari, Iubens id omne observari et adimpleri quod ab eo declaratum fuerit circa personas legatariorum et quantitates legatorum in omnibus et per omnia, ac si ab ea, in eodem Testamento fuisset de verbo ad verbum expressum et specificatum.

Ea propter praefatus Reverendus Dominus Laurentius coram infrascriptas testibus Testamentarijs, et me notario, declaravit et expressit nomine praefatae Serenissimae Barbarae eam fecisse et facere, prout ipsa sibi dixit in secreto, legata omnia pecuniarum et bonorum de quibus infra dicetur, quae ipse Dominus Laurentius specificavit, et sermone Italico mihi notario scribenti sic dictavit, ut in fine huius instrumenti continebitur.

Facta fuit hac declaratio parum post conditum dictum testamentum eodem Die quinto Iunij anni 1572 Indictione quintadecima ferrariae in curia praefati Illustrissimi Ducis praesentibus dictis testibus Testamentarijs [?]

Illustre comite Hectore Mirolio q. Illu. co. Baldasseris habitante Mantuae

Magnifico Domine Scipione q. magnifici Domini Nicolaj Bonlei nobillis ferrarensi

Domino Andrea q. Leonardi Pauhofer de Ispruc valetto di camera praefatae Serenissimae Dominae

Domino Marco Antonio filio Domini Constantini de Cavedalis di Salo hostiario camerae praefatae Serenissimae Dominae

Bolfgango Stegher di Ratemberg q. Christofori credencerio praefatae Serenissimae Dominae

Domino Nicola Savana q. Domini Io. Mariae cive ferrariense et Domino Dominico Zaffarino quondam Domini Petri notario publico et cive Ferrariensi

Sequuntur tuta legata ut sopra declarata sequere ut in folio hic inserto manu mia scripto
Ego Antonio colornius notario publico ferrariensis

Ego Idem Antonius Colornius q. D. Hierom. Publicus apostolicus aust. Notarius et civis ferrariensis subscriptis interfui, eaque rogatus scripsi. In quare fidem hic me subscripsi, signumque meum tabellionatus consuetum apposui.

Legati fatti per la Serenissima Barbara de Austria Duchessa de Ferrara, secondo la declaratione fatta per il suo confessore in virtu del Testamento di Sua Altezza.

Prima lascia alla Fabrica dilla chiesa del Giesù di Ferrara scudi dua millia doro in oro, come anco sintende chetuttli seguenti legati siano de scudi doro in oro ▼2000

Al Collegio delli Padri del Giesù di Ferrara per loro sustentatione scudi mille ▼ 1000

Alli Monasterij et lochi pij poveri di Ferrara in tutto scudi mille da esser tra loro dispensati ▼1000

Alli Frati di San Spirito di Ferrara, oltre la portione del soprascritto legato ancora gli lascia scudi Trecento ▼300

Alla fabrica della giesa et monastero di Frati capuccini di Ferrara scudi cinquanta ▼50

Alla povertà miserabile di Ferrara scudi mille ▼1000

Alla Serenissima Reina Leonora d'Austria Duchessa di Mantova sua sorella Lascia, per memoria di lei, quella reliquia che le mandò a donare lo Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Cardinale di Ferrara con il suo vaso d'argento dorato nel quale si trova, et li bottoni di pietre pretiose che sono in guardarobba et li dua vasi grandi d'argento cioè li primi et maggiori.

Alle dame Tedesche della sudetta Duchessa di Mantua darà lo Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Duca di Ferrara quanto parerà a sua Eccellenza.

Alla Illustrissima et Eccellentissima Madama Leonora da Este lascia uno de suoi anelli d'oro con la pietra dentro cioè quello ch'è di maggior valore.

Alle sue Dame Tedesche et ancora a tutti li altri seguenti lascia come seguita cioè

Alla signora Dorothea Fixine scudi mille et cinquecento ▼1500

Alla signora Beatrice Contessa di Lodrone scudi duamillia ▼2000

Alla signora Sabina Vuazzalerino moglie del signor conte Federico Mirolio, le due più belle vesti et di maggior valore, che habbia sua Altezza.

Alla signora Lena moglie del s. Scipione Bonlei le altre due seguenti veste più belle et più pretiose.

Alla signora Anna Kuenin donzela di Sua Altezza Scudi settecento ▼700

Alla signora Annisca donzela di Sua Altezza scudi settecento ▼700

A madona Sabina moglie di messer Andrea Pauhofere et alla sua figliuola Barberina scudi docento et tutti li panni de lino di ogni sorte che ha sua Altezza ▼ 200

Alla Catherina Gruoberin sottodama scudi cento cinquanta ▼ 150
 Alla Catherina Schwartzlin sottodama scudi cento ▼ 100
 Alla Maria Pruenckerin sottodama scudi cento ▼ 100
 Alla Barbara di Baviera sottodama scudi settanta ▼ 70
 Alla Anna Flori sottodama scudi settanta ▼ 70
 Alla Helena Svarzlin sottodama scudi cento ▼ 100
 Alla Catherina Cuoga scudi ottanta ▼ 80
 Alla Sara spiciala scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 Alla Eva Lavandara scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 Alla Ursola sotto lavandara scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 Al Padre Don Lorenzo suo confessore scudi Trecento et il pomo d'argento nel quale sono reliquie sante et esse reliquie ▼ 300
 A Don Luca suo capellano scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 A messer Andrea Valetto di camera scudi cento ▼ 100
 A messer Marco Antonio Usciero scudi cento cinquanta ▼ 150
 A messer Giorgio Valetto di camera scudi cento ▼ 100
 A Bolf Stegher credenciero scudi ottanta ▼ 80
 A Valentino Botigliero scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 A Giorgio fornaro scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 A Giovanni Cuogo scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 A Christoforo staffiero scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 A Giovanni Marangone scudi trenta ▼ 30
 Ad Andrea Parecchiadore delle Dame scudi trenta ▼ 30
 A Iacomo Staffiero scudi trenta ▼ 30
 A Usualdo sarto di Sua Altezza scudi cinquanta ▼ 50
 Alle Dame Italiane la sua come segue cioè:
 Alla Illustre Signora Leonarda Estense Bentivoglia, per memoria et segno di benivolenza, dui vasi d'argento cioè li secondi con due tazze.
 Alla sua figliuola, Signora Margherita, la quinta veste cioè la più bella et più pretiosa, sotratte le quatro sudette.
 Alla Signora Isabella Semenza scudi quatrocento ▼ 400
 Alla signora Isabella Bendedia scudi quatrocento ▼ 400
 Alla signora Laura Sosena scudi quatrocento ▼ 400
 Alla signora Hippolita Corezara scudi quatrocento ▼ 400

Alla Thadea Nana scudi cento ▼100
 Alla Lucrezia sottodama scudi quaranta ▼40
 Alla Hippolita sottodama scudi quaranta ▼40
 Alla puta Mora che è apresso alla Signora Polissena Rangona Bevilacqua scudi cinquanta ▼50
 Alla Margarita figliuola fu del Piffaro scudi cinquanta ▼50
 Al putino orfano nato di uno hebreo fatto christiano scudi trenta ▼30
 Alla Isabella dalla Scala scudi trenta ▼30
 Alla putina figliuola della Bolognese che è a balia scudi cinquanta ▼50
 Al Magnifico Messer Remo Brasauola medico scudi docento ▼200
 Al Magnifico messer Enea Caprile medico scudi cento ▼100
 Al sp. messer Ludovico Gillino Cancelliero scudi centocinquanta ▼150
 A messer Giovanni Nano scudi centocinquanta ▼150
 Alli sottoscritti lascia quanto parerà all'Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor Duca di dargli overo in argenti, overo in denari, secondo la qualità et conditione di cadauno.
 Al Magnifico signor Pigna secrettario di Sua Eccellenza
 Al Magnifico messer Antonio Maria Canano medico
 Al signor conte Federico Mirolio
 Al signor Borso Bonacossa
 Al signor Scipione Bonlei
 A messer Alfonso Sanseverini
 Al Cavalliero Marescotto
 Al Capitano Antonino Ferro
 A messer Alessandro Pocaterra
 A messer Hercole Semenza
 A messer Hippolito de Sanluca
 A messer Benedetto Vassalo
 A messer Gregorio Todeschino
 A messer Cesare Seraffino sotto mastro di stalla
 A Pietro usciero
 A Cesare credenciero di Sua Altezza
 A Battista Bottigliero delle Dame
 Ad Davit staffiero
 Ad Antonio staffiero

A Bastiano staffiero

A Girolamo sopracogo

A Bastiano cuogo

A Dui sotto cuoghi et alli Guateri

A Giovanni fachino della camera

Ad altri cinque fachini, cioè: Iacomo Fachino alla credenza, Marco Antonio fachino alle Dame, Pietro Antonio fachino alla Botliglieria, Andrea Fachino lavapiati, et Natale Fachino delle Dame.

A Giorgio Fincheler

A Nicolo Filipoc

A Giovanni paggio Polaco

A Carlo Naiser paggio

Alla signora Fattora, cioè madonna Maria del Zesso, lascia le reliquie dove è il dito di Santa Barbara con il suo vaso d'argento nel quale sono, con questo che dopo la sua morte le restituisca alla chiesa de sudetti Padri Giesuiti, alla quale le lascia et vuole che dopoi restino sempre.

Le altre reliquie et tutti li vestimenti et ornamenti spettanti alla capella et all'altare di Sua Altezza con lo calice, patena et tutti li paramenti, lascia alla detta giesa delli Padri Giesuiti.

La sepoltura del suo corpo vuole che sia nella giesa delli detti Giesuiti, cioè in quella che hora hano et poi, fatta la nova giesa, si transfferisca in quella.

Idem Antonius Colornius

Codicilli Serenissimae Barbarae de Austria:

In Christi nomine amen. Serenissima Regina Barbara de Austria, nata olim foelicissimae memoriae invictissimi Imperatoris Ferdinandi, uxor Illustrissimi et Excellentissimi Domini Don Alfonsi secundi Estensis Ducis quinti Ferrariae, sana Dei gratia mente et intellectu, licet corpore infirma, post testamentum ab ea conditum rogatum per me notarium die quinto instantis mensis Iunij praesentes codicillos etiam condidit et eis declaravit se velle Legata, quibus gravavit praesentum Illustrissimum et Excellentissimum Dominum Ducem eius haeredem, in pecunia et quae nomine ipsius Serenissimi ducis declaravit eius confessor Reverendus pater Dominus Laurentius ascendentia ad Summam scutorum sexdecim millium vel circa, et ut constat ex eius declaratione scripta per me notarium dicto die, solvi debere ex primis pecunijs quas praefatus Illustrissimus et excellentissimus Dominus Dux consequetur ex dote eius ab

Invictissimo Imperatore Maximiliano fratre suo cuius Maiestati ipsa Serenissima Barbara supplicavit quatenus dignetur dotem ipsa solvere ut ex ea huiusmodi legata persolvi possint. Caetera vero quae in dicto testamento continentur plenissime confirmavit. Et hanc dixit esse suam ultimam voluntatem et velle eam valere iure codicillorum et quocunque alio iure, quo magis et melius valere poterit firmiterque tenere.

Acti fuere praesentes codicilli a praefata serenissima Barbara et per me notarium iussu eius lecti et publicati Anno nativitatis Domini nostri Iesu christi millesimo quingentesimo septuagesimo secundo. Inductione quintadecima die duodecimo Iunij Ferrariae in curia ducali, in camera cubiculari praefatae Serenissimae Dominae, praesentibus Testibus ad haec specialiter adhibitis vocatis et rogatis videlicet:

Domino Alexandro Pocaterra q.d. Ioannis phillipi cive Ferrariense

Domino Marco Antonio filio D. Constantini de Cavedalis de Salo hostiario camerae praefatae serenissimae Dominae

Bolfgango Stegher de Ratemberg q. Christofori credencerio praefatae Serenissimae Dominae

Domino Dominico Zaffarino q.d. Petri notario et cive ferrariense Et

Domino Nicolao Bertazzolo q.d. Antonij notario et cive Ferrariense

Ego Antonius Colornius q.d. Hieronimi pub. apost. auct. notarius et civis ferrariensis scriptis interfui eaque rogatus scripsi. In quare fidem hic me subscripsi, signumque meum tabellionatus consuetum apposui.

Quem ob locorum distantia de fide et legalitate notario dubitari solet, iccirco Nos Matheus Maria parisetus Iuris utiusque Doctor Regiensis et eques ac praetor urbis ferrariensis omnibus sequibuscumque ad quos praesentes vestrae pervenerire fidem facimus et attestamus scriptum D. Antonium Columnium qui d. prescriptis testamento cum declaratione ac codicillis rogatus extitit fuisse et esse publicum authenticum et fide dignum notharium civitatis ferrariae et in matricula ceterorum notariorum dictae civitatis annotatum et descriptum scripturumque suis in publicam et authenticam formam redactum plenam semper adhibitam fuisse et adhiberi fidem in iudicio et extra, Inquor fidem praesentes nostras exinde fieri sigillique in solita appensione muniri mandavimus. Datas ferrariae in palatio nostro anno a [?] Domini nostri Iesu christi millesimo quingentesimo septuagesimo secundo in dictione xv die vero xxiiii mensis septembres.

Francesco Benevenuto

Cancelliere de mandato.

Last Will and Testament of Eleonora von Habsburg, Duchess of Mantua
Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga, Busta 332, Rubrica 2

Nota bene: all abbreviations have been expanded where known. All original spellings have been maintained. The punctuation has been modernised.

1591: 9 Aprile

Testamentum Serenissimae Divinae Dominae Leonorae de Austria de Gonzaga,
Ducissae Mantuae et Archiducissae de Austria

Ex Rogitibus Cesaris amigoni Notarij Mantuae

Testamentum Serenissimae Divinae Dominae Leonorae de Austria de Gonzaga
Ducissae Mantuae et Archiducissae de Austria.

In Christi Nomine amen.

Anno Domini a Nativitate eiusdem millesimo quingesimo Nonagesimo primo.
Indictione quarta Die vero Martis Nono mensis Aprillis, tempore Serenissimi Principis
et Divini Domini Rodulphi divina sibi favente Clementia Romanorum Regis et
Imperatoris electi Invictissimi et semper Augusti Mantuae in Contrada Aquilae et in
Curia Vetere in Camera solitae Audientiae infrascriptae Serenissimae Dominae
testatricis, presentibus... Illustrissimo Ser Consulis Domini Camillo filio quondam
Illustrissimi Domini Nicola de Gattico Procuratore de meritissimo Ser Illustrissimo
Serenissimo Ducis Mantuae...ore proprio infrascriptae Serenissimae Dominae
Testatricis rogatis. Ibique Serenissima Divinae Dominae Leonora d'Austria de Gonzaga
Dei gratia Mantuae et Montisferrati Ducissa et Archiducissa d'Austria, Vidua ... felici
Memoriae Serenissimi Divini Domini Guglielmi Gonzaga olim Mantuae et
Montisferratis Ducis, Sana per gratia omnipotentis Dei mente, sensu, Intellectu, ac et
Corpore memoria tenens quae nil esse certius morte illius ac hora Incertius nollens eius
Celsitudo intestata decedere, sed dum sana reperitur [...] est de bonis sibi eius
Celsitudini ab omnipotenti Deo Donatis ad sui non autem alieni Arbitrium disponere.
Hoc suum presens nuncupatium quod sine scriptis vocatur testamentum in hunc qui
sequitur modum facere Procuravit et fecit. In primis enim Anima eius Celsitudinis
Corporis Preciosam Deo Altissimo eiusque Gloriossissimae Virgini Matri Mariae ac toti

Curiae Celesti piaie Devote et humiliter raccomandavit. Corpus vero suum sive Cadaver eum ab eo anima fuerit separata sepelliri iusset in medio ecclesiae Collegij Reverendorum Iesuatorum de Mantua, Cuius ipsa Serenissima Domina fuit fundatrix in un capsula lignea cum lapide Marmorea supra, Cum Arma, Inscriptioneque nominis et Cognominis tantum predictae eius Celsitudinis et hoc ut illi qui in dies accedent seu ingredientur in dicta ecclesia ad orandum, Memores sint Animae ipsius Serenissimae Dominae testatrix. Ulterius ipsa Serenissima Domina testatrix Iure Institutionis et legati fecit et facit infrascripta omnia legata interius de Commissione predictae eius Celsitudinis vulgariter scripta. Et primo la predetta Serenissima Signora testatrice, per ragioni d'Institutione et legato, lassa et lega all'Hospitale grande di Mantova scudi Cento d'oro in oro a y 6 l'uno per una sol volta. Item, per raggion predetta, lassa et lega al Venerabile Hospitale dei Poveri della Misericordia di Mantova scudi cento cinquanta simili per una sol volta, et questo oltre il gravame imposto nell'instromento di Donatione fatta alli Reverendi Padri Giesuitti di Mantova di pagar a detto Hospitale scudi venticinque all'anno, del qual instromento ne son rogato io notaro infrascripto sott'il di d'Hoggi. Item, Similmente per raggion d'Institutione et legato, lassa et lega all' Venerabile Hospitale della santissima Trinità in Santo Antonio di Mantova scudi Cento simili per una sol volta. Item, per la medema raggione, lassa all' Hospitale detto di Cathecumini scudi cento cinquanta simili per una sol volta, et questi oltre il gravame imposto alli sodetti Reverendi Giesuitti nell'sodetto Instromento di Donatione di pagarle scudi venticinque l'anno a y 6. Item per la medema raggione lassa et lega l'Altezza Sua alle Reverendissime Convertite di Mantova scudi cento cinquanta simili per una sol volta. Item, similmente per la medema raggione, lassa et lega alli Reverendi Capacini di Mantova scudi duoicento per una sol volta per fabricar il luoro Monastero. Item l'Altezza Sua, per la medema raggione, similmente lassa et lega alla molto Reverenda Madre Sor Anna Gonzaga, in santo Vincenzo di Mantova professa, scudi Duoicento a y 6 l'uno per una sol volta. Item, per la medema raggione, lassa et lega alla Reverenda Sor Leonora Gonzaga similmente professa in santo Vincenzo, scudi cinquanta simili per una sol volta. Item similmente, per la medema raggione, lassa et lega l'Altezza Sua alla Reverenda Sor Prudentia de Grignano pur di detto Monastero di santo Vincenzo ▼ ti [=scudi] 25 simili per una sola volta. Item, per la medema raggione, lassa et lega l'Altezza Sua a Sor Bassanamaria, professa in santa Chiara di Miliaretto, senza Padre et senza Madre et già dall'Altezza Sua per Amor d'Iddio allevata, scudi cinque a y 6 l'uno ogni anno mentre viverà, et doppo la lei morte in perpetuo al detto Monastero di

Miliaretto, dalli quali scudi cinque annui si puossi perrò liberare l'infrascritto serenissimo dell'Altezza Sua herede per il pagamento de scudi cento simili, d'esser all'hora Investiti in una proprietà idonea di reddita di scudi cinque simili all'anno, d'esser pagatti a detta Sor Bassana in sua vita per proveder a suoi bisogni et necessità, et doppo la lei morte sijno pagatti al Monastero in perpetuo. Item l'Altezza Sua ordina, Casoché al tempo della Morte d'essa Serenissima Signora testatrice, Madonna Hellena di Gonzaga, già figliola hora nella Misericordia comorante et all'Altezza Sua piu anni sono molto raccomandata dal già Illustrissimo Monsignor Cardinal Borromeo, et per l'Altezza Sua accettata per l'Amor d'Iddio acciò non andasse a male, di consenso perhò ancho come l'Altezza Sua asscrisse del già Serenissimo Signor Ducha Gulielmo di felice Memoria dell'Altezza Sua Consorte, Non sij maritata, gli siano pagatti scudi Mille a y 6 l'uno per sua Dotta per una sol volta, et Caso vaddi Monacha, gli siano pagatti per lei Dotta overo elemosina scudi trecento a y 6 simili solamente, et anco oltre a quello, et tutti gli suoi fornimenti necessarij per tal ingressione et scudi dieci ogn'anno di livello, sin tanto vivera essa Monacha per proveder a suoi bisogni. Item detta Serenissima signora testatrice, per la medema ragione d'Institutione et legato, lassa et lega a tutti gli infrascritti signori servidori et serve dell'Altezza Sua, et a cadauno di luoro l'infrascritte somme et quantità di legato, ma per una sola volta. Et Primo l'Altezza sua lassa et lega per ragione d'Institutione et legato, come di sopra, alla signora Dianna Borromea Brola scudi mille di oro in oro a y 6 l'uno, et un paio di Candelieri, un bacino et Bochal da Camera d'Argento, et questo oltre il gravame imposto come di sopra alli sodetti Reverendi Giesuitti di pagarli li scudi cinquanta annui nel sodetto Instrumento di Donatione per me notario rogato, et Caso detto signora Diana Manchasse avanti l'evento della Conditione, a quella ch'entrarà in lei luogho per servir l'Altezza Sua, gli lassa solamente per la medema ragione scudi cinquecento per una sol volta. Item detta Serenissima signora testatrice, per la medema ragione, lassa et lega come di sopra alla signora Giovanna Gerra Fogara scudi mille simili, et di piu un paio di Candellieri, un bacino et un bochale d'Argento da Camera, et questo ancho oltre il gravame imposto a detti Reverendi Giesuitti di pagarle ogn'anno scudi Cento simili, come in detto instrumento di Donatione, et caso detta signora Giovanna Manchasse com'è detto di sopra, a quella che succederà in luocho suo gli lassa solo scudi cinquecento per una sol volta. Item, per la medema ragione, lassa et lega l'Altezza Sua alla signora Isabella d'Hippoliti scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta, et mancando detta signora Isabella avanti l'evento della Conditione, comanda l'Altezza Sua che detti

scudi cinquecento sijno pagatti a quella ch'entrarà in lei luochò in detta servitù. Item, per la medema raggione, lassa et lega l'Altezza Sua alle Dame con la signora luoro Governante di quel tempo della morte d'essa Serenissima signora testatrice scudi cinquecento simili per cadauna di luoro per una sol volta. Item l'Altezza Sua lassa come di sopra a Madonna Catherina che serve alla Camera scudi trecento simili per una sol volta, et essa mancando come di sopra, che sijno pagatti a quella ch'entrarà in suo luochò in detta servitù. Item a Madonna Lucretia che serve alla Camera per la medema raggion gli lassa l'Altezza Sua scudi Duoicento simili per una sol volta, et mancando essa madonna Lucretia come di sopra, che sijno pagatti a quella ch'entrarà in suo luochò come di sopra. Item l'Altezza sua lassa et lega come di sopra alla sollomè scudi Cinquanta simili per una sol volta. Item, per la medema raggion, l'Altezza sua lassa alla signora Laura Panicella scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta, et, Caso lei manchasse come di sopra, all'hora in tal caso lassa come di sopra alla signora Beatrice lei figliuola, moglie di messer Bartholameo Lino, scudi trecento simili per una sol volta. Item l'Altezza sua lassa come di sopra alle serve delle Gentildonne et Damme che si ritroveranno in Corte al tempo della morte d'essa serenissima signora testatrice, gli lassa scudi venticinque simili per cadauna per una sol volta. Di più l'Altezza sua, similmente per raggion d'Institutione et legato, lassa et lega a tutti gli Infrascritti dell'Altezza sua signori servidori et in remuneratione di luoro servitù et a ciaschun di luoro le infrascritte quantità de Danari, et per una sol volta. Et Primo al Molto Illustre signor Cavaglier Hieronimo Negri Maggiord'homo dell'Altezza sua scudi mille a y 6 l'uno per una sol volta, et lui mancando come di sopra, a quello ch'entrarà et sarà in suo luochò scuti cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item per la Medema raggione lassa al signor Mastro di stalla che sarà scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item al signor Maestro di Camera che sarà, per la medema raggion, lassa scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item lassa l'Altezza Sua al signor Scalcho che sarà scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item lassa et lega l'Altezza sua per la medema raggione al signor Secretario che sarà, scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item similmente lassa l'Altezza Sua come di sopra, Al signor Medico che sarà, scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item, per la medema raggione, lassa et lega l'Altezza sua come di sopra alli signori Copiero, Tranzante et scudieri che saranno, scudi cinquecento per cadauno simili per una sol volta. Item lassa come di sopra al Reverendo Don Lorenzo Botazzuolo scudi cinquecento simili per una sol volta. Item lassa similmente l'Altezza sua Come di sopra a quattro Paggi col capellano scudi mille simili d'esser dispensatti

equalmente, cioè la rata parte a ciasch'un' di luoro. Item lassa l'Altezza sua come di sopra a Giovanni, Carlo, Francesco et Vincenzo, fratelli figlioli di me Cesare Amigoni notario Infrascritto, scudi Doicento simili per una sola volta, cioè la rata parte a ciasch'un di luoro et quali sostituisse l'un l'altro in detto legato di detti scudi Duoicento, et questi per la servitù del già messer Giovanni Amigoni mio zio et ancho di me Notaro. Item, similmente per la medema raggione, lassa et lega l'Altezza sua scudi mille cento cinquanta simili, quali comanda che sijno doppo la lei morte distribuiti et dispensati tra tutti gli altri suoi servidori di qual si voglia sorte stipendiati, havuto però sempre rispetto nella detta dispensatione alle qualità et conditioni luoro et de luoro officij, Comandando però l'Altezza sua che la minor somma d'esser pagatta non habbi a esser meno de scudi dodeci simili. Di Piu detta Serenissima signora testatrice, per raggion di prelegatto, lassa et lega al Serenissimo Signore Il signor Vincenzo Gonzaga Ducha di Mantova et Monferrato Dell'Altezza sua figliuolo Diletto un Diamante legato in un Anello d'oro, cioè il più bello et di più prezzo che si ritrovera haver l'Altezza sua alla lei morte. Item, per raggion d'institutione et legato, lassa et lega l'Altezza Sua alle Serenissime signore: Arciduchessa di Austria, signora Duchessa di Ferrara, et Duchessa di Mantova, dell'Altezza sua figliole et Nuora rispettivamente, Duoi Rubini et un Diamante, legati in Anelli d'oro, oltre a quello lassato al Serenissimo signor Ducha come di sopra, Si che perro sij in elettione della serenissima signora Duchessa di Mantova di pigliar per se uno delli Duoi Rubini o il Diamante, qual piu gli piacerà, et gli altri Duoi, o Rubini, o Diamante et Rubino che restanno, si dividono tra le Serenissime signore figliole. Di piu detta serenissima signora testatrice, per raggion similmente d'Institutione et legato, lassa alla predetta Serenissima signora Duchessa di Mantova et Monferrato, dell'Altezza sua Nuora, Il Palazzo di Porto colla sua Possessione, Peschera et prati d'Ongaria Dietro, colle Gravezze che se li ritrovano sopra et come a Sua Altezza serenissima fu lassato dalla Felicissima memoria della già serenissima signora Duchessa Margherita, cioè a pagar ogni anno sachi venticinque di formento alle suore di santa Pauola di Mantova. In Tutti gli altri dell'Altezza Sua Beni: mobili, Immobili, raggioni o attioni, Debiti et Crediti et se moventi, di qual si voglia sorte in qual luocho si sijno et si ritrovino essere, lei Herede Universale instituisse vuol che sij, Ordina, comanda, et con la Bocha propria dell'Altezza Sua nomina Il Serenissimo Signore Il signor Vincenzo Gonzaga per l'Iddio gratia Ducha di Mantova et del Monferrato, dell'Altezza sua figliuolo diletteissimo, Qual Serenissimo Herede essa serenissima signora testatrice priegha a volersi acquettare et contentarsi di questa sua

ultima volontà, priegandolo di più, come ancho lo priegha per la Passione et Viscere del Salvator nostro Giesu Christo, et per quel Amor filiale che sempre l'Altezza sua ha mostratto portarle, ad essequire, seguita la lei morte, quanto l'Altezza sua ha ordinato nel presente suo testamento, et a riponer ancho doppo la lei morte nella Grotta il lei scrittorio azoiolato, a perpetua memoria dell'Altezza sua. E questo è dell'Altezza sua ultimo testamento et ultima volontà, la qual essa serenissima signora testatrice dice voler che vaglia per raggion di testamento et ultima volontà, et se per detta raggione non valesse o non valerà, vuole l'Altezza sua che vaglia per raggion di Codicillo, over Donatione per causa di morte, o per ogni altro miglior modo che puossi valere et tenere, Cassando, revocando et annullando ogni altro testamento et ultima volontà per l'Altezza sua sin qui fatto, volendo che il presente prevaglij a tutti gli altri. Sopra le qual cose comanda l'Altezza sua che io Notario infrascritto ne Debba fare un publico Instrumento a perpetua memoria. Ego Caesar filius Nobili Domini Annibalis d'Amigonibus civis Mantuae ... notarius ... scripsi et subscripsi...

Appendix 3

Ambassadors' Letters

Nota bene: all original spellings have been maintained. Abbreviations have been expanded where known. The punctuation has been modernised. Where parts of the letters have been encoded, I have noted the fact and transcribed the contemporary translation. All documents are unpaginated and are therefore referred to by date rather than page number. The documents are ordered by *Busta* and by *Fascicolo*; the letters are mostly in chronological order; where deviation from said order occurs I have not amended it, so as to avoid confusion. Not all letters are included – I have selected only those which refer in a significant manner to Giovanna or Bianca.

Cancelleria Ducale Estero
Ambasciatori, Agenti e Corrispondenti Estensi
Italia
Firenze
Busta 22
Ambasciatore Rodolfo Conegrani

Fascicolo 5 dated 1567:

Letter dated 5 february 1567: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il di 5 febraio 1567.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, per le ultime di genoa se inteso che sanpino corso e stato amazzato in corsica in una scaramuga d'un archibusata pero che glie rimasto un suo figliolo che tiene pur susitato quei rumori. Il conte d'alta mira si trova qua a far Carnevale con questi signori et mi ha detto che novamente il signor Don gratia [Don Garzia di Toledo] a comissione di non si partir di genoa senza suo ordine et che lui [?] che sua maesta habbia a venir in italia che contra il parer d'ogni altro il signor Duca d'alva vera al [?] per quanto mi a detto et presto. Del resto questi signori attendono a far il suo Carneval allegramente et il di della candelone il contino di san secondo fece in casa sua una comedia et un bellissimo banchetto doverano tutti questi signori insino a sua altezza [Giovanna] ancor che si trova in nove mesi ma volse farli questo per haver pigliata una sua creata per moglie che si chiama la signora trapana et non havea ancor fatto il banchetto delle sue nozze dopoi che la haveva condotta a casa; vi era da 60[?] gentildone et il signor cardinale fece una bella mascherata di sei et si duro a balar tutta la notte. Ancor io feci il mio banchetto et veglia heri sera dove fu la signora Dona Isabella con 25 gentildonne, il signor Don pietro figliolo minore di sua eccellenza, il conte d'alta mira, il signor chiapino et molti altri cavaglieri. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] et signor cardinale [Ferdinando] si trovava fori a caregio, il signor principe [Francesco] mi haveva dato intentione di venir manon vene per che sua altezza si sentiva malle per il disagio che patì quella sera, ancor che non vi stete se no insino a meza notte. Domani fara la sua festa il signor principe in palazzo et poi il signor cardinale et la signora Dona isabella la domenica et il di di carnevale et con questo quanto piu humilmente posso le bascio le mani et prego dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 5 February 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 5 febraio 1569.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, l'Ambasciatore di francia si parti tre di sono per Roma et ha hauti li Δ.ti 100 m da questi signori, li quali la maggior parte li sono statti remessi in lione da questi mercanti, et ha lasciato le gioie in mano di loro eccellenze et fra le altre vi è un rubino di valuta di Δ.ti 60 m. Il vescovo di Narni gionse qua dui di sono mandato da mon signore alloro eccellenze a conferir seco l'animo di Sua Santità intorno ad aiutare il Re di franza, et in un certo modo a chiedere consiglio et a pregare loro eccellenze a contentarsi di darli ancor loro quel aiuto di giente che per loro si potranno per beneficio della religione christiana per che Sua Santità, per quanto ho inteso, voria darli 4 m fanti et 200 cavalli pagati; loro eccellenze hanno fatto alloggiare il detto vescovo in pallazzo et lo accarezzono assaj et gionto la sera et la matina hebbe audienza dal signor Duca [Cosimo] et poi dal signor principe [Francesco]. Di poi il signor Duca è itto a pisa per starvi otto di con pocchissima giente, et ha lasciato il signor principe et secretario concino ad espedirlo, credo partira domani; s'io intendo la risposta che haverà hauta da loro eccellenze non mancaro farlo sapere alla eccellenza vostra et d'ogni altro motivo che si farà per questo effetto. Qua si dice che il conte di santa fiore sarà capo di queste gienti di Sua Santità, però da Roma non scrivono già questo particolare; del resto qua il carnovale va assai freddo, parendo a loro eccellenze che li tempi comportino così; però domenica passata il signor paulo et la signora [Isabella] fecero un festino dove convitorno 12 gentildonne et poi quelle di casa; sua altezza [Giovanna] non vi andò, il signor Duca vi fu et vi cenò, si ballò in anti cena, et dopo cena si fece una comedia de Tani et poi si ballò infino a giorno, però il signor Duca finì la comedia se ne andò, et il signor principe il medesimo il quale non era però venuto seno dopo cena. Il dì della candelora[?] Sua Altezza fece noce in palazzo havendo maritata una delle sue dame todesche ch'è la signora laura nel signor Cesio Romano creato di sua eccellenza et lora scalco del signor principe, remunerato et assai comodo di Robba, et haverà di dotta intorno a 4m Δ.ti con li presenti fattoli da tutti questi signori. Convittorno 12 gentildonne delle prime, et la signora con tutte le sue dame, però la signora non vi stette se non insino a tanto che fu dato l'Anello et poi se ne tornò a casa, ritrovandosi il signor paulo in letto con un poco di febbre per causa d'una risipilla venutali in una gamba; si ballò insino ad hora di cena et dopo cena se ne andorno subito a dormire, e questo è quanto mi trovo degno di vostra eccellenza

illustrissima, alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani et prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni sua maggior felicità.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 17 May 1567: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 17 maggio 1567.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, vostra eccellenza Illustrissima intendera come questi signori hanno hauto nova certa che il signor Duca d'Alva gionsse a Nizza alli 10 di questo con 17 insegne di spagnoli et con molti cavalieri et che sua eccellenza si era affermata li per esser indisposto di febbre terzana, et che si voleva purgare; intanto il signor Andrea doria era venuto con le galee a gienoa a disbarcar queste gienti et il signor chiappino era ito a ritrovare il prefatto signor Duca, il quale risanato che sara se ne verra a gienova. Appresso le dico come partito che fu il signor Paulo quel conte di bragaj comato si parti ancor lui per ritornarsene a casa sua, et per quanto mi vien detto non ritornera piu non si essendo accomodato al servitio di questi signori come si era detto che si accomodava; la causa non si sa, se non che si dice che serve lo imperatore e per questo loro eccellenze non hanno voluto accettarlo. Questo Arcivescovo di fiorenza se ne ritornato a fiorenza, do poj esser statto [?] anni che no ha voluto venire; et fecce riverenza privatamente a tutti questi signori ad uno ad uno, le quali hanno mostrato vederlo volentieri, et dui di sono fecce la sua entrata solene incontrato dal clero, da tutti li magistrati, et molti gentilhuomini della citta, con la cirimonia solita, et fece in quella matina un grand et bel banchetto che v'erano 104 persone alle tavole: v'era il signor Nuntio, li Ambasciatori invitati, però niuno delli principi, ne meno il signor cardinale vi vene. Vostra eccellenza sa poi che a questi di le scrissi che s'era detto che questa Donna [Eleonora degli Albizzi] che tiene il signor Duca [Cosimo] havea partorito un figliuolo, il che non fu vero. Hora le dico per verissimo ch'ella a dui di sono il partori con molto contento di sua eccellenza per quanto mi è statto riferito; hora si dice che la vol maritare, si stara a vedere. La intendera ancor come il signor principe [Francesco], sua Altezza [Giovanna] hanno maridata la Semenza a messer Iulio da pistoia suo scalco, di eta di anni cinquanta cinque, però robusto et tiene d'entrata Δ.ti ottocento. Lei se ne contentata, l'ha voluto ancor che sua eccellenza et Sua Altezza mostravano di non gliela dare molto volentieri et si hanno fatto pregare prima che si siano risoluti, et li darno 2m Δ.ti di dotta. Non restaro di dire a vostra eccellenza come s'inteso qua per l'ultime di fiandra che il principe d'oranges havea renotiato l'ordine del toson, come vostra eccellenza deve haver inteso Ancor lei, alla quale quanto piu humilissimamente posso bacio le mani e pregamo signor iddio per ogni sua maggior felicità.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo serv itore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 23 August 1567: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 23 Agosto 1567.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, per non haver altro che scriver a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima, solo le diro che post domani il signor principe [Francesco] con Sua Altezza [Giovanna] farrà banchetto in palazzo per onorar madonna laura somenza con il suo marito, li quali andarono poi la sera a casa loro a consumar il matrimonio, e mi vien anche detto che il signor Duca [Cosimo] manda ancor lui la sua donna [Eleonora degli Albizzi] a casa carlino panciatico suo marito, però senza solenita alcuna, e sua eccellenza ha fatto il prefatto carlino gentilhuomo della sua camara, e mostra vederlo molto volentieri, e io questo fine quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani, e prego dio per ogni sua maggior felicità.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 27 August 1567: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 27 Agosto 1567.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, per la lettera di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima di 18 del presente ho inteso l'ordine che lej ha dato per la differenza di Sassalbo, il qual non mancaro far intendere a loro eccellenze. Appresso la intendra com'heri sua eccellenza [Cosimo] mando la sua donna [Eleonora degli Albizzi] a casa il marito, ma prima sua eccellenza la fece sposar a piti, presente il padre et alcuni parenti e parente e sorella del sposo, perche delli suoi niuno visivolse trovare; do poj fatto questo ella monto in cocchio su quello di sua eccellenza, accompagnata da tutti li cortegiani di prefatto sua eccellenza, col marito se ne andorno alla messa a una chiessetta piccola vicina a casa loro, e poj a casa dove consumorno il matrimonio; in questo modo sua eccellenza si è liberato di questa Donna. El bambino, sua eccellenza lo tiene a piti, et dicono ch'è bellissimo. Parimente heri matina Sua Altezza [Giovanna] con loro eccellenze fecero banchetto dove vene alcune gientildonne maritate in questi cortegiani per honorar madonna laura somenza et do po mangiare si balo insino alla sera e sua eccellenza [Cosimo] le fece favor di ballare un ballo con essa e invero tutti questi signori l'hanno honorata assaj e la sera ancor lej se ne ando a casa col marito accompagnata da molti gentil huomini e gentil donne. Sua Altezza da dui di in qua non si ha sentito troppo bene, anzi dicono che ha hauto un pocco di febbre, però non lo vuol cofessare per che, essendo io su la festa, le domandaj come stava bene, mi disse che non havea altro male se non che li doleva un poco il capo, e il signor principe [Francesco] ancor lui non si sente troppo bene ha un cataro nel stomaco assaj fastidioso, et è afflitto assaj; intendo che fa molti disordini, et ha anco mal a un piede, sua eccellenza dice che è statto dando a un cane. E questo è quanto posso dir per hora a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani e prego dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 8 September 1567: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il di 8 settembre 1567.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, con l'ordinario passato risposi quanto m'occorreva alle lettere di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima di 22 del passato et primo di questo. Hora le dico ch'io ho parlato con questo signor Duca [Cosimo] sopra il far conventioni in quella maniera che vostra eccellenza mi comando, e sua eccellenza me rispose: io saro sempre pronto a fare quello che tornera a beneficio comune, e soggiunse: fatte venir una minuta di quella forma che piaceriano a sua eccellenza et datemela, e in effetto conobbi che sua eccellenza ve indinava. Si che se piacera a vostra eccellenza mandarmela io gliela presentaro e non mancaro di star avertito che non habbiano a eccetuar parte del suo statto; per che per infin hora non ho voluto movere parrola, anzi mostrato di non haver memoria alcuna di quel particolar. Appresso vostra eccellenza intendra come quello cata briga che loro eccellenze ricercavano che vostra eccellenza le desse nelle mani è statto amazzato sul luchesse, però non accadra che vostra eccellenza ne faccia Altro, ma con tutto questo il secretario concino mi disse: Ambasciatore non ne havete maj fatto intendere dove si riparano quej ribelli del conte monte cucoli che sua eccellenza desidrava haver nelle mani, però fatecelo intendre. Io ne ho scritto due volte alla eccellenza vostra per altre mie si che stano aspettando che ella me ne dia aviso volendoli pure nelle mani. Del resto le dico come don emanuel de luna, castellano di Cremona, è venuto qua per parte di Sua Maestà Cattolica [Philip II] a visitar Sua Altezza [Giovanna] con loro eccellenze e ralegrarsi del parto; è stato qua dui di molto accarezzato, el signor principe [Francesco] li ha donato un cavallo di spagna e Sua Altezza sej paia di guanti profumati e certe Altre galanterie di modo che si è partito sodisfatto. Vostra eccellenza havera anco inteso come il cardinale monte pulciano ha hauto l'Arcivescovato di pisa con volonta di loro eccellenze. Sua Altezza sta Assaj bene e ha dato principio a purgarsi e la signora Donna Jsabella ancor lej è migliorata da poj che se li è scoperto il vaiolo; il signor paulo [Paolo Orsino] ancor che gli habbiano espediti dui corrieri per il male di prefatta signora non è però ancor comparso e questo è quanto posso dir per hora a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima, alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani e prego nostro signor iddio per ogni sua maggior contentezza.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Fascicolo 6 dated 1569:

Letter dated 15 February 1567: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza adi 15 febraio 1567.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron oservandissimo, io quest'ordinario non posso dir altro a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima se no che dui di sono parti il signor luca rem, quel gentiluomo che tenea lo imperator'[Maximilian II] appresso a questa altezza [Giovanna], chiamato da sua maestà, et prefata Sua Altezza li ha donato una colana da 400 ▼.ti et un vaso d'argento che ne vale 200, ho poi inteso che lui ha detto che il signor principe [Francesco] li ha donato 2m ▼.ti in dinari pero questo non ho inteso da altri. Io so bene che sua eccellenza li volse asignar 50 ▼.ti al mese per sua provisione quando vene qua et lui non li volse parendoli forse puochi; potria forsi esser che hora il signor principe li havesse fatto questo presento per mandarlo via contento, chiara cosa e che lui ha detto haverli hauti et che se ne va molto contento. Per le [?] di Roma se inteso che sua santità ha dato il vescovato di Mantua ad un frate di san dominico mantuano de boldrini con 4m ▼.ti di pensione [?] varie persone il qual frate era pero nominato dal signor Duca di mantua. Qua si e poi finito il cavnevale, et la domenica il signor cardinale fece livrea con il conte d'alta mira et ancor altri gentilhomini et corsero al anelo certi vasi d'argento a chi facea piu botte avanti alla casa della signora Dona isabella et lei fece la sera la festa che duro insino al di con 25 gentildone senza quelle di casa et vi fu ancor sua altezza pero subito che hebbe cenato se n'ando perche ogni di e il suo per parturire et sta benissimo dio gratia. Il lunidi li accademici di questa cita fecero una comedia nelle stale del papa, laparato era bellissimo et di molta spesa et fu ben reciutta et tutti questi signori vi furno et sua altezza ancora; la mando qui alligata a vostra eccellenza per esser cosa nova. Il signor principe diferi a far il suo bancheto il di di carnevale il qual'fu sontuossissimo, et hano [?] con un luoto di valuta di 200 ▼.ti di varie cose per li huomini, et per le done aneli con diamanti, rubini et altre gioe, guanti profumati, colanine et poi altre cosete di puoco valore, piu tosto da far ridere per coloro a chi le tocavano [?]; v'erano ancor alcuni vasi d'argento et tutte queste cose erano accompagnate con li suoi versi di modo che per due hore questo loto dette un bellissimo passatempo. A me toco un rubino di valuta di 12 ▼.ti, le done erano da 50 computa[?] quelle di casa et dopo cena si balo in sino al di. Il signor paolo non e mai venuto pur is aspetta; la signora Dona isabella mi ha detto che vol ire alla madona di loreto questa quatrigesima et che di la vol poi venir a ferrara con animo di andarsene a venetia et che vol far ogni opera per condur seco il signor cardinale [Ferdinando]; ella lo dice et

mostra di dire da davvero, non so mo se lo fara, et con questo fine quanto piu
Humilmente posso le bascio le mani et prego dio per ogni suo maggior esaltacione.
Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 26 February 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 26 febraio 1569.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, siè finito el carnevale senza farsi cosa degna di Aviso a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima, salvo che la dominica Sua Altezza [Giovanna] fecece veglia e banchetto con invito de 25 gentildonne della citta, dovendo quella sera il signor cesio condurre la sua sposa a casa sua. Dil resto loro eccellenze tendono a mettere insieme questi suoi huomini d'arme d'ordinanza, et il signor Alberto pio e il cavaliere somma hanno hauto 250Δ.ti per cadauno per fare li suoi cavalli, e per dar Δ.ti 50 [?] e altro motivo non si fa per infin hora per che se pur vorrano far fantarie tosto le farano, e non havendo altro degno di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani, et prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 27 April 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 27 Aprile 1569.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, stamane il serenissimo arciduca [Charles] è intrato in fiorenza con questo ordine, ma le diro prima che Heri sera il signor principe [Francesco] vene dentro [Florence] et stamane, con 100 cavalli tra gientilhuomini fiorentini et alcuni senesi e certi pochi forestieri e cavalieri di Malta et santo stefano, però senza ordine, vestiti tutti di drappo di setta alla cortegiana, ricamente, con cavalli guarniti parte di velluto, parte con chiodame e parte di coio, e la maggior parte con gualdrappe, è ussito fuori della porta dua miglia ad incontrar Sua Altezza [Charles] che veniva in compagnia con il signor Duca [Cosimo], Sua altezza a man destra, con tutti li gientihuomini e cortegiani della corte ch'erano al numero intorno a cavalli 100 con una compagnia de cavalli legieri alla coda, non havendo altrimenti fatto mettere in battaglia ne cavalleria ne fantaria alla porta, havendo loro eccellenze fateli vedere di molte bande di fantaria per il camino et anche due di cavaleria, e cosi introrno dentro nel mezo di questi gientilhuomini, essendo Sua Altezza [Charles] nel mezzo et il signor Duca a man destra et signor principe a sinistra, e nelentrare scaricorno le due fortezze l'artelaria, e si sonavano le campane del duomo dove andorno a smontare et eravi l'arcivescovo a riceverlo con le debite cerimonie; et do poi haver fatte oratione rimontorno a cavallo e andorno con il medesimo ordine a pallazzo dove stava Sua Altezza [Giovanna] aspettandolo, in una camera a terreno con la signora Donna jsabella e da 50 gientildonne delle prime della citta, vestite tutte di drappi d'oro dj setta e ricamj con gioie, e Sua Altezza vestita con una sottana che il fondo era di velluto nero e di sopra tutta ricamata d'oro e d'aregiento di rilievo che apena si vedeva il velluto e di sopra una vesta credo fusse canovatio di setta bianco et oro con un fregio di ricamo intorno con gioie infinite in testa e perle al collo; e la signora Donna jsabella vestita tutta di bianco et oro d'un drappo con ricami e gioie infinite e perle bellissime al collo, tanto riccamente vestita e con tanta garbatura che non si potea desidrar piu. V'era il signor paulo[Orsino], signor Don luigi di tolledo, il signor Nuntio, io , L'Ambasciatore di luca e il loco tenete del signor Duca con li consiglieri, et sotto di loro l'arcivescovo di siena con quattro vescovi del statto, e poi li quaranta otto tutti vestiti con sagli di velluto e il luco di sopra di rassa fodrato di raso chremesino, tutti per essere in compagnia della signora principessa [Giovanna] a ricevere Sua Altezza. V'era anche la bambina in collo alla balia e come furno vicino a pallazzo il signor principe si spinse avanti e vene a smontar e piglio sua altezza per mano e la condusse su la porta dove

smontato il serenissimo [Charles] li toco la mano e li fece riverenza e l'abratio, et tutti di compagnia andorno accompagnare sua Altezza [Charles] alle sue stanze dove erano apparecchiate le tavole per desinare e il signor Duca fu il primo a licentarsi da sua altezza con molta somissione e riverenza e sene ando a spolverare; Sua Altezza lo volse accompagnare e non volse, di poi si licentio il signor principe con Sua Altezza [Giovanna] e l'Arciduca fece gran contrasto per voler accompagnare sua altezza alle sue stanze, ma in effetto bisogno che restasse, e cosi spolverati che furno loro eccellenze e la signora principessa, venerno a trovar Sua Altezza [Charles] e si missero a tavola nel salotto dipinto con quest'ordine: prima la signora principessa di poi l'arciduca dietro il signor Duca e poi il signor principe, e la signora Donna isabella d'incontro al signor principe, et altri non mangiorno a quella tavola. Di fuori nel altro salotto vicino si fece una tavola a quattro piati dove mangiò il signor Don pietro e mon signor torna boni con li gientil huomini di Sua Altezza che erano da 15. Questa sera non si fa cosa alcuna, per che li giovani del calzo non sono vestiti, di modo ch'io credo che Sua Altezza sara sforzata a star qua insino lunedì volendo vedere tutte queste feste, ma com'io habbia la certezza della partita non mancaro expedire una stafetta alla eccellenza vostra come li ho scritto per altre mie, e non voglio restar di dirle che il signor Duca e signor principe erano vestiti a l'ordinario, il signor Duca con un feltro coperto di mocaardo [*the duplicate copy of this letter adds that the mocaardo was 'nero'*], il signor principe con un cappotto di domasco, e non mi occorrendo dir altro per hora a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani e prego nostro signor Dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 2 May 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 2 Maggio 1569.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, per la mia ch'io scrissi Heri a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima con l'occasione della partita del conte fedrico de mafej, la intendra tutto quello che fecero questi signor in quel di et come fecero la comedia di giorno che fu finita a hore 24 et di poi un banchetto grande et sontuosissimo con 150 gentildonne ma non tutte, però vestitte ricamente ma ben di drappo di setta, et alla tavola a pontatta da loro signori, ancorche fusse capace di 10 persone et piu tosto piu, non vi mangio se non le due altezze [Giovanna and Charles], il signor Duca [Cosimo] e la signora Donna jsabella et non altro, et sua eccellenza stette tanto lontana da Sua Altezza quanto ch'era fuori del baldchino mezo braccio, tanto che venea ad essere lontano uno bratio et mezzo come è statto sempre al mangiare. Il signor principe [Francesco] magno retirato come fa sempre in questi banchetti et alle tavole delle donne no vi mangio niuno huomo, però il signor Don pietro [Pietro de' Medici] fece la tavola delli gentilhuomini di Sua Altezza secondo il solito, et si ballo insino a di chiaro di modo che sta mane hanno dormito e mangiato cadauno da se rittirate et stasera il serenissimo et sua eccellenza senza il signor princiipe a cavallo, per che non sono maj itti in cocchio, sono andati al giardino delle stalle di sua eccellenza et quel di don luigi di tolledo et poi in casa di pittori, scultori a vedere piture rare et figure di bronzo, di marmo et altre cose che fa far sua eccellenza et nelle stanze del frate matematico dove si fa quelle palle di tre bratia di diametro, una sfera della terra et l'altra del cielo, et le tavole de tutte le provintie del mondo, et altri labbij bellissimi et tutti li instrumenti di gieometria degni d'esser visti, di modo che sua eccellenza le ha voluto fare vedere che in questa citta oltre tante arte che vi sono, ve anco quella della cosmografia et gieometria. Sta sera cenerano secondo il solito e non voglio restar di dirle che il piu delle volte il serenissimo [Charles] dopo il mangiare è itto accompagnare Sua Altezza [Giovanna] alle sue stanze et li sedano tutti su le seggiolle ad intertenirsi, però il signor Duca con molta riverenza sempre un poco lontanetto e questo è quanto posso dire a vostra eccellenza di tutte le ciremonie et accoglienze ch'io hovisto et che mi sono statte riferte con verita, siche se vostra eccellenza havera haute tutte le mie che io le ho scritte, come credo havera, credio havergliene dato minuto conto. Appresso la intendra come mi vien detto da ogniuno et da quelli del serenissimo che la signora principessa et signor principe fano un presente al serenissimo di tutti li apparamenti di quella camera dove ha dormito cioè il letto dove consumorno il matrimonio, tanto bello et ricco come le ho

scritto altre volte, et il paramento tutto broccato rizzo sopra rizzo bellissimo quanto possi essere et un tavolino di Allabastro finissimo tutto intersiato di agatta, corniole, lapis lazar, chiappis, et simile cose, et loro dicano che ogni cosa insieme vagliono Δ.ti 25 m, ma io heri fu apostata ad esaminare ben il tutto et giudicai che no valeano piu de 10 mila Δ.ti. Intendo ben anche che il signor Duca li fa un presente di non so che cose ma per infin hora non so che saranno; se lo sapro non mancaro dargliene aviso. Domani vano alpoggio a desinare tutti i signori et signore et tornerano la sera e domani farano la bufola e post domani partira e starano a cafagiolo la sera e poi di longo a bologna et aferrara e hoggi sono itti alpoggio per potersi servire di quelle robbe amandar a mettere al ordine cafagiolo et hano prolungato per questo la partita del serenissimo un di di piu, però subito che sono per partire espediro una stafetta alla eccellenza vostra, vedendo che tutta via fano mutation, pero credo al fermo che sabato Sua Altezza sara inferrara. In questo ponto ho inteso per fiorenza che sera alle 4 hore di notte loro eccellenze hanno hauto nova che le sue gallere sono ite tutte a traverso per causa della fortuna, però non ho certezza piu che tanto, e con questo fine le bacio le mani e prego nostro Signor iddio per ogni suo Maggior contento.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 5 May 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 5 di maggio 1569.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, in quest'hora che sono le hore 14 espedisco una stafetta per dar aviso a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima come il serenissimo [Archduke Charles] va questa sera a cena a cafagiolo accompagnato da loro eccellenze e post domani a desinare a loiano[?] e a cena a bologna dove stara a desinare, e la sera a cena a ferrara con vostra eccellenza Illustrissima et di gia sono inviate delle robbe di Sua Altezza et tutti hano li stivalli per partirsi come haverano desinato, di modo ch'io vedo pur che vogliono partirsi e se ben ho scritto variatamente di questa sua partita non è però che l'huomo non sappia le cose ma per che Sua Altezza manco lo sapeva lej medesimo di certo per che se ben l'aviso suo era di partirsi luni primo passato questi signori per farli vedere queste sue feste l'andavano intertenendo d'hoggi in domani, e come era la sera li metevano a torno la signora principessa [Giovanna] con pregarla affermarsi qua un altro di, tanto che Sua Altezza non posseva far di manco, di modo che l'hanno intertenuto insino hoggi. Mentre ch'io scrivo questa è comparso il venitiano corrier espedido dal conte Hercole tasson con una lettera al signor martio coloreti senza scrivere cosa alcuna a me, ne meno comissione di farmi motto, il che m'è parso molto strano, come a dire che il signor martio sapesse meglio le cose di me che non è mai statto giorno ch'io non habbia visto Sua Altezza in camera e tratenutomj con lej, e per detto venitiano mando questo piego con ordine che se ne vengi con diligenza di longo alla eccellenza vostra, alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso bacio le mani e prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani'

Post In questo ponto che sono le hore 14 ch'io espedisco il venitiano corriero ho inteso che la serenissima signora principessa con la signora Donna isabella et tutte le dame vano accompagnare ancor loro il serenissimo a cafagiolo e appresso le dico che loro eccellenze non hanno donato altre colane con quelle 10 ch'io ho numerato alcollo a questi gentilhuomini, le quali sono pure di valore di Δ .ti 4m e delli altri doni che fanno loro eccellenze a Sua Altezza [Charles] intendo non ha voluto accettar se non il tavolino e certi cavalli, però se intendo altrimenti lo faro sapere a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima. [separate page] lista delli presenti che fano loro eccellenze al serenissimo et suoi gentilhuomini:

Prima tutti li Abigliamenti della camera dove ha dormito che sono di valuta di Δ .ti 10m.

E piu un scrittoio bellissimo con gioie e oro batuto dentro il quale vide il conte Hercole tassone.

E piu sette cavalli parte del regno parte di spagna et parte della Tazza[?].

Delle sopra dette cose io le intendo da ogniuno però non ho quella certezza ch'io desidraria per che si crede che Sua Altezza non habbia accettar tante cose, però se loro Eccellenze gliele vorranno mandar dietro lo potranno fare, et di tutto quello intendo non mancaro avisarne vostra eccellenza.

E piu per 4 mila Δ .ti de collane a questi suoi gentil huomini, le quali sono gia destribuite con una medaglia con la testa del signor Duca el numero chi dice 22, chi dice trenta, però io ne ho numerato infina a 10 al collo di detti gentilhuomini e la maggior è di Δ .ti 500 che è quella del maiordhuomo maior e poi di 400 et 300 et 200 secondo li gradi loro, ma io son ben certo che sono di valore per il meno di Δ .ti 4 mila come vostra eccellenza potera ben iudicare come ella le vedra.

E di piu intendo che il signor Duca [Cosimo] in particolar li fa un presente d'una credenza di vasi d'argiento d'orat di parechi millia Δ .ti, la valuta di quanti siano malamente si po sapere, però di quello che tutto intendo come credo intendre anche meglio quando sara partito non mancaro dargliene aviso.

Spesa delle feste fatte:

prima per il giocho del calzo: Δ .ti 1500;

per la comedia computa la sera con concerti: Δ .ti 4 mila;

per il banchetto: Δ .ti 1500;

per il giocho delle bufole: Δ .ti 8 mila;

per il coro/cono[?]: Δ .ti 500;

e questo è il giudico universale et secondo che ancor io ho iudicato di tutto quello ch'io ho visto per che ho visto ogni cosa eccetto il banchetto ch'io non vi fui convitato ne maj ho mangiato a corte in tutti questi giorni per che non [?] detto nulla seno che il signor montalvo me acceno un di che voleva ch'io mangiassi alla tavola del signor Don pietro et io feci le viste de non intendre e me ne veni a casa.

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Fascicolo 7 dated 1569:

Letter dated 24 November 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 24 Novembre 1569.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et Patron osservandissimo, Avanti hieri gionse qua una gentildonna tedescha che viene del Regno de Napoli per accompagnar una sua figliuola che va per damigiella della figlia dell'imperadore che sara Regina di spagna; la quale fu figliuola del gia Don Pietro detto il biancho di casa di tolledo che fu castellano di questi signori, la quale loro eccellenze la mandorno a incontrar per il maiord'huomo alla Porta con alcuni gentil'huomini, e Sua Altezza [Giovanna] ha voluto che allogia in pallazzo con tutte le sue donne le quali sono intorno a otto, e il resto delle sue genti al hostaria; però le fano le spese a tutti e intendo che sono da cavalli 10 e bocche 15 e va in letica; e ho inteso che dice voler venire a Ferrara a baciare le mani e far riverenza alla serenissima signora Duchessa, et deli a Mantova. Mangia con la contessa da bagni e con le dame di Sua Altezza e credo partira domani o post domani e questo e tutto per aviso a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima, alla quale non havendo altro che dirle quanto piu humilmente posso bacio le mani e prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore.

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 3 December 1569: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 3 Dicembre 1569.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, Donna Sofia cioè quella Donna tedescha parti di qua giove dj da poi mangiare in leticha, accompagnata da molti gentilhuomini di questa corte e parimente dalla signora princestana con altre dame di Sua Altezza infino fuori della porta, dove andorno in cocchio di compagnia, e li poi si misse in letica per venirsene di longo a Ferrara, come vostra eccellenza Illustrissima havera inteso per le mie ultime mandate per la cavalcata de milano; e la sera avanti, ritrovandosi la signora Donna jsabella, la quale sta assaj bene, a Pallazzo con Sua Altezza, mostrorno invitar de improvviso le medeme gentildonne che furno parimente al festino di detta signora e cosi fecero una comedia de Zani e poi cenorno di compagnia e da po cena se ne andorno subito a dormire. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] non vi resto a cena come fecce a casa della signora [Isabella] insieme con il signor Cardinale e signor Don pietro, senza il signor principe [Francesco] e Sua Altezza, le quali cenorno poi seco in quella sera. Che Sua Altezza gli habbia donato cosa alcuna non ho potuto haver certezza ma ben si crede per ognuno che habbia hauto qualche cosa, come sarebbe a dire de questi belli drappi d'oro da vestire. A questi di venne qua un tesauriero della imperatrice, il quale ne conpro per Δ.ti 6m e parte ne furno inviati pochi di sono e parte ne conduce seco questa donna, la quale è statta accarezzata et honorata quanto sia statto possibile, la mandorno anco un giorno a veder castello. Appresso vostra eccellenza Illustrissima intendra come si dice per la corte e per fiorenza che il signor Aurelio fregoso è morto in viena il secondo di do poi che fu gionto; però questi signori non lo vogliono dire, ma io credo che sia vero per che loro eccellenze hanno fatto elletione de messer Agnolo di girolamo guicciardini, gentilhuomo qualificato e virtuoso, di eta intorno a anni quaranta, per mandarlo a far li medemi complimenti che dovea fare il detto signor Aurelio, ancor che lui non si lascia intendere dove vada se non che dice che se invia alla volta di trento, e vi va seco da cinque in sej gentilhuomini e anderano in posta. Loro eccellenze hanno anche espedito questa settimana per roma messer giulio de ricasoli e hanno spanto voce che ito per provvedere alla casa del signor cardinale, però molti vogliono che sia ito per conto della Credenza. Dil resto habbiamo tempi assiuti e freddi eccessivi e questo è quanto mi trovo degno di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso bacio le mani e prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni sua maggior consolatione.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Fascicolo 9 dated 1570:

Letter dated 11 November 1570: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il di xi Novembre 1570.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, con le mie di 8, mandate con la occasione della cavalcata di milano in mano del maestro delle poste di bologna con ordine che le mandi subito all'eccellenza vostra, l'havera inteso quant' li ho scritto intorno al ragionamento tenuto con il signor Principe [Francesco] et signor Duca [Cosimo] del mio negotio, del quale non ne faro altro infino ch'io non habbia risposta da lej. Dil resto le dico che il signor Cardinale Alessandrino si trova ancor qua e stamane ragionando con sua santità Illustrissima ha mi detto che vol partire post domani per Roma ancor che non sia molto ben sano e mi disse della discordia venuta fra il signor Marco Antonio e il signor Andrea dorio, la quale ha causato che non habbino fatto cosa alcuna per che non hano voluto cedere luno al'altro, donde che adesso sono in gran disputa, e che quanto alla posta[?] di Nicosia non la crede non vi essendo altro aviso con quello che dette la fragatta[?] de turchi [?] da detta arrivata, e stamane tutti questi signori con la signora principessa [Giovanna] sono iti a desinare e a far sanmartino con sua santità Illustrissima alle sue stanze, e domani sera si fara le nozze della signora princenstana maritata nel signor scipione fratello del signor jacopo piccolomini, il quale si trova qua ancor lui. Questa settimana e partito il capitano Nicolo alemani per francia sodisfatto da questi signori per molte offerte fattogli e per la speranza che le hano datta di restituirli certi beni che le tengono. Et anche partito il conte gismondo di san secondo per ispagna come le scrissi dovea partire e il signor troilo orsino partira domani e questo è quanto mi trovo degno di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso bacio le mani e prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni sua maggior esaltacione.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima

humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 18 November 1570: from Conegrani to Alfonso (part in code not translated):

Da fiorenza il 18 Novembre 1570.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, giovedì primo passato parti il signor Cardinale Alessandrino non havendo potuto partire il luni per il mal tempo e continue piogge che sono statte questa settimana, et credo sia partito molto sodisfatto di questi signori et ancor che sia statto 21 di qua sempre uno di loro le hano tenuto compagnia, hora il signor Duca [Cosimo], hora il signor Cardinale [Ferdinando], hora il signor principe [Francesco], oltra che l'hanno onorato et accarezzato con molta amorevolezza et domestichezza, et il signor Duca l'ha fatto manggiar seco con la signora camilla come fusse statto de suoi ppui[principui?] et al partir suo la serenissima principessa le ha donato una tunizella[tunichella?] bellissima et alcuni panicelli per il callize, et altre gallantarie, et quella sera che si fece il banchetto per le nozze della signora princistana dove furno convitate da 25 gientildonne delle piu belle della citta et la signora principessa lo intratene quasi sempre ecceto quando ballava, perche' si ballo in anti cena et do po cena et si fece musica di varii strumenti. Ancor io mi vi trovai, perche la signora principessa mi mando a convitare; il signor Duca si parti su l'hora della cena e ando apitti a cenar' con la signora Camilla che non era stata convitata et il signor principe ancor lui non mangio a tavola. La signora principessa con tutti questi altri signori tene compagnia al signor cardinale Alessandrino a una tavola partata dalle altre secondo il suo solito, pur nella medesima sala dove mangiarono le altre gientildonne. Non restaro di dire a vostra eccellenza che qua si dice che l'Arcivescovo di questa citta renontia l'arcivescovado al signor cardinale Alessandrino et poi che sua santità lo fa patriarcato della toscana et che sua eccellenza ha donato anco a Sua Santità Illustrissima un sitto per farsi un pallazzo in questa citta però io non ho certezza piu che tanto, e quasi che non la credo, però ogni cosa po esser' et si stara a vedere quello ne reusira. Ho inteso che il signor Andrea Dorio è montatto in gallea per andar in ispagna a dire le sue ragioni a Sua Maestà [Philip II] e il signor ponpeo colona va per terra per il signor Marc'Antonio. Le diro anche che giovedì notte venendo il cienere si acesse fuoco per causa d'un camino nelle stanze delle ballie delle banbine in pallazzo presso le stantie di sua Altezza et abrusio un palco e non fece Dio gratia altro male però tutti li signori si levorno a farlo spenggiere. Ho inteso che il signor Duca è pur d'aviso di volere andare a pisa per un pezzo et dicono che vol partire luni proximo a venire se sara bon tempo, e questo è quanto mi trovo per hora degno di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima

alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso bacio le manj e prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni sua maggior esaltatione.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

[*code*]:

Per risposta della lettera le dico che io fui alla messa dil di santo Lorenzo il quale era vestito secondo il solito; benè vero che il di della [?] d'Agosto si comunicò in san Lorenzo con molti Cavalieri del suo ordine et havea l'abito credo di Gran maestro come suo solito, et questo sara stato l'habito detto dall'Ambasciatore; pur me ne chiarirò meglio se era l'habito di Gran maestro o pure quell'altro et ne darò aviso. Della [?] non n'è successo altro, se non che scrivano da Roma che la cosa del Duca di fiorenza Sua Maestà la rimetta agli elettori dell'Imperatore [Maximilian II].

Letter dated 2 December 1570: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il 2 Dicembre 1570.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, hebbi la lettera del secretario pigna di 19 e 22 del passato dove intesi il successo per causa de terremoti e in bon proposito non ho mancato dirne a questi signori, e il signor principe [Francesco] mi disse: non posso far altro se non far pregare iddio per loro a questi monasterij, come ho gia fatto. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] si ritrova ancora apisa dove s'intende che fa ballare et che se ne stano allegramente cola signora camilla et signora leonora [Eleonora di Toledo] moglie del signor Don pietro. Dil resto questa settimana si sono fatte prosesioni per causa delle saette che sono datte in questa cupola, con pregare il signor iddio che si guarda da male, e se inteso che il terremoto è venuto a empoli senza far dano e parimente un monaster di monache fori della terra un miglio dicono haverlo sentito una notte nel loco dove sono, però insin hora non è successo altro, la bonta de iddio ci aiuti tutti. La signora principessa ha fatto la sposa la signora Hieremia tedescha sua dama a messer Camillo degli Albici gientilhuomo fiorentino, con festa e banchetto solleno al pari di quello della signora princestana; e questo è quanto piu humilmente posso bacio le mani e prego Nostro Signor Dio per ogni sua maggiore esaltatione. Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore, Ridolfo Conegrani.

Busta 23

Fascicolo 2 dated 1571:

Letter dated 12 May 1571: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il di 12 maggio 1571.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo, con il ritorno del mastro di casa del signor Corneglio dico a vostra eccellenza che il gargano [Gio' batista gargano, in Ferdinando's household] se n'ando a Roma tutto contento per che, oltre alli onori et carezze fattoli da tutti questi signori, la signora principessa [Giovanna] li dono un boccale et bacillo d'argento et altre cose per la sua moglie di valore di molti scudi, et il forno et pallurino[?] sono usciti con sigurta di mille scudi per [?] di nonsi offendere et vano per firenza, ma io per ancor non ho visto il forno ne parlato. Il mio stafiero e ritornato et ho visto quanto vostra eccellenza mi scrive intorno alla espeditione de [?] la qual cosa mi [?] sempre difficile maggiormente credo mi sera hora, pero non mancaro usare ogni diligentia possibile. Per le ultime di genoa s'intende che li spagnoli batano il finale et che li hano anco dato un asalto et che vi e dentro il signor Alberto dal carretto che si lascia intendere tenerlo per sua maesta cesaria come vostra eccellenza deve sapere, et altri dicono che si tiene per francesi. Dil resto il signor Duca estatto questa settimana con la signora camilla quatro di a pistoia a veder fortificar quella citta dove lavorino gagliardamente et intendo che finito che sera che quelli homini verano a lavorare qua, et loro eccellenze hano mandate artigliarie a siena et a pisa et che vano munendo tutti i luoghi che ne hano bisogno. Non voglio restar di dire a vostra eccellenza che dopoi la partita di messer giulio del caccia loro eccellenze espedirno pur per ispagna messer Nofrio da pezzo secretario nuovo , et intendo che [?] in le galere di Napoli forse come persona non conosciuta et intendo che e assai pratico a quella corte. Della lega qua la tengano per conclusa, ma non dicano in che modo; questi ambasciatori si dice che partirano fra otto di. Il signor don pietro [de'Medici] si aspetta questa sera che viene da Roma et il signor Cardinale [Ferdinando] non vera in sino a san giovanni. Stamane mandai dal secretario concino per haver la risposta del memorial' sopra le differenze de confini, et mi mando a dire che il signor principe [Francesco] l'havea visto ma che non havea ancor presa resolutione per alcuni dubij che sua eccellenza havea, et come mi vedea mi parlaria, si che come io lo veda intendero quello vora dire et questo e quanto posso dire per hora a vostra eccellenza alla quale quanto piu Humilmente posso bascio le mani et prego il signor iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

[Included in this letter a loose note by Conegrani]:

Ho ricevuto la procura per riscuottere i cinque mila scudi però dico che hanno accettato e in scritto e in voce le eccellenze come vostra eccellenza havrà visto nelli mie mandate per il staffiero, credo accetteranno anche la procura mostrando di non se ne curare, però non farò altro motto insin che io non habbia altro aviso per non far peggio. Il Gargano mi disse che il Forno era imputato haver voluto amazzare il Duca, però uscirà di prigione come habbia dato sigurtà di mille scudi di non offendere il Palatino.

Letter dated 15 August 1571: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza il di 15 Agosto 1571.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et Padron osservandissimo,

Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima intendra come questi signori espedirno dua di sono il signor Ferrante de' Rossi al serenissimo Arciduca carlo per congratularsi del maritaggio fatto con la figliola del signor Duca di Baviera et Hiersera espedirno il conte Clemente pietra ad esso signor Duca per la medesima causa et sono iti con sette poste per cadauno computati dua gentilhuomini di questi giovani della corte che vanno con cescaduno di loro. Apreso la intendra come tre di sono ritorno da Roma il gentilhuomo mandato da Principi Boemi a Sua Santità [Pius V] il quale fu alloggiato in palazzo et molto accarezzato da loro eccellenze et Sua Altezza [Giovanna] et alla partita lo hanno apresentato di collane e drappi d'oro intorno alla valuta di mille scudi, per che ho pur' inteso che quando venne la prima volta visito anche il signor Duca [Cosimo] in nome di loro Altezze et li porto lettere credenziale; et parimente loro eccellenze e sua Altezza hanno apresentato di vasi d'argento et altre robbe alla valuta pur circha ottocento scuti a quel gentil'huomo che venne mandato dal signor Don Giovanni d'Austria. Il signor Duca si trova a val ombrosa con la signora camilla dove e ito a comunicarsi in questa festa della madonna, et sara di ritorno fra tre di per ritrovarsi al parto della signora Principessa il qual sera al'fine di questo mese, secondo ella tiene, et questo è quanto posso dir per hora a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso baccio le mani, et priego Dio per ogni sua maggior esaltatione.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Fascicolo 3 dated 1572:

Letter dated 1 March 1572: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da firenze il di primo Marzo 1572.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor Padron osservandissimo,

Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima intendera come il signor Duca si trova anchor a Pisa et alcuna volta va a Livorno et atenda a far' armar' le dua galeazze e otto galere per darle a sua santità [Pius V] a questo buon tempo, et ho inteso che ha fatto cavaglier dj santo stefano messer Antonio Martellj suo socero con una comenda di 1500 Δ.ti d'entrata. Qua è ritornato il signor Mario sforza il qual si parti di qua a di passatj in un subito et si disse per esser il signor prencipe [Francesco] sdegnato con esso luj et parimente con la sua consorte, per che lei havea detto a sua Altezza [Giovanna] che il signor Prencipe faceva l'amor con la signora Biancha Capella Venetiana, pero potria esser che fussj per qualche altra causa la qual non si sa, pero sua eccellenza lo vedde volentieri come prima facea et credo che si fermara, anchor che detta sua Consorte non e ritornata che sempre soleva venir con luj. Qua si dice che il serenissimo signor Don Giovannj e partito di Palermo et che il Re di tunisj si trova con sua Altezza et si credde che habbia a far' qualche buon profitto et che habbia ad andare sopra algierj, tanto piu che s'intende che Sua Maestà [Philip II] havea fatto di nuovo 5m spagnoli per questo effetto. Et questo e quanto mi trovo degno di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla qual' con ogni riverenza possibile Baccio le mani et priego Dio per ogni sua maggior' esaltatione.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Fascicolo 4 dated 1572:

Letter dated 11 August 1572: from Conegrani to Alfonso (postscript in code):

Da Fiorenza il dj ij dj Agosto 1572.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor e patrone mio osservandissimo, havendo inteso questo signore principe [Francesco] che il signor prainer' giunse hier' sera a scarperia, mandò stamani a buon hora il Cavalier' saracino che serve ancora per maior' domo a in'contrarlo et lo trovò alla prima posta; di poi Sua eccellenza verso le undici hore montò a cavallo con tutta la corte, dove hero ancor' io essendomi stato fatto intendere che sua eccellenza voleva andare, et andò a incontrare detto signore e lo trovò a i ponti fuori della porta dove sua signoria fece reverenzia a sua eccellenza la quale lo raccolse con buonissimo viso et detto signore disse queste parole: Io son venuto qua privatamente et a buon hora per che non volevo dare disturbo a la eccellenza vostra non essendo venuto per altro che per fare reverenzia a Sua Altezza [Giovanna] et a vostra eccellenza, però quest'ultima parola a pena li uscì di bocca ch'io notai benissimo ogni cosa, e detto questo sua eccellenza se lo messe a man destra e così andorno di compagnia in sino a palazzo e sua eccellenza lo volse accompagnare in sino alle stanze del signor Cardinale dove l'hanno alloggiato, e detto signore dopoi essersi spolverato e riposato alquanto fece intendere a sua Altezza havea lettere di sua maestà per lei e che con suo comodo desidereria andargli a far' reverenzia, e subito sua Altezza mandò il conte pulidoro castel a levarlo e condurlo da lei, la quale gli venne incontro sino all'uscio della Camera e dopoi haver' baciato gli le mani gli fece dar' da sedere e stettero ritirati ben' per un' hora e mezo, et in quel tempo venne il secretario concino il quale si a fermò in l'anticamera dove hero ancor'io, et in ultimo Sua Altezza fece venire tutt' a tre le signore principesse et gliele fece vedere e quella più grande con buon modo domandò al signor prainer di sua maestà, et all' hora intrai in Camera ancor'io dove si stette poi un'altra hora a trattenimento et Sua Altezza fece grande istanzia per che non havesse a partir' hoggi ma in effetto sua signoria con molte scuse dicendo che havea Mandato una parte della sua famiglia per la romagna non poteva restare et che al ritorno si fermeria poi quanto sua Altezza volesse, et così si licentiò e senandò accompagnato da molti gentil Huomini alle sue stanze dove hera in hordine il desinare e desinò tenendole compagnia il Cavalier saracino, e doppo desinare fece intendere al signor principe che volea licenziarsi da sua eccellenza, la quale gli fece intendere che dovesse andare come fece et si licentiò senza entrare in altri ragionamenti, e detto signore principe l'accompagnò in sino fuori delle sue stanze e così detto signore se ne ritornò alle sue

stanze a riposare con dire che si volea partire alle ventun hora, come ha fatto con sei poste accompagnato sino alla porta dal detto Cavalieri et il conte pulidoro castel. Del resto ho inteso che il signor duca [Cosimo] è ritornato a vall'ombrosa e sua eccellenza sene stà la a quei freschi per che qua non si può vivere per li eccessivi caldi. Delle cose del mondo altro non le posso dire se non che loro eccellenze hanno avviso che il serenissimo signor Don Giovanni ha havuto hordine da Sua Maestà di hunirsi con l'armata venetiana et si crede che a quest'hora si trovi tutta insieme nell'arcipelago, piaccia al signore che faccino qualche impresa hutile et'honorata, e con questo fine quanto più humilmente posso bacio le mani a vostra eccellenza Illustrissima e prego il signor Dio per ogni sua maggior' exaltazione.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

[Post script added in code. From translation]: 'Tutto questo ch'io scrivo a vostra eccellenza è vero perche quando non vi sono stato un mio non l'ha mai abbandonato. Però ella stia sicura che detto signore non ha negoziato con persona ne fatto piu di quello che io le scrivo in questa che è quanto ha comandato il secretario Pigna con la sua di 29 del passato in nome di lei.

Fascicolo 5 dated 1573:

Letter dated 28 March 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Di Firenze il di 28 di Marzo 1573.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio et Padron'osservandissimo, Vostra eccellentia Illustrissima intenderà come questo signor Duca [Cosimo] gionse a Castello doi di sono, et fece fare per partirsi da Pisa un bucintoretto sopra doi barchetti nel quale è venuto facendosi tirare contra acqua per venire più comodo che non haria fatto in Letiga, ritrovandosi malcondotto come si ritrova, perche intendo che sua eccellentia non può andare et muove con fatica i bracci et parla con grandissima fatica, pur dice qualche parola che s'intende, Però si lassa vedere et riceve lettere et ascolta et si fa portare per il giardino su una seggiola. Il signor Bonifacio, gentilhuomo del signor Duca di Savoia, non è ancora spedito et desiderava andare a trovare sua eccellentia a Castello ma non l'hanno lasciato andare, dicendogli che sua eccellentia non è ancora in termine. Però il Concino gli ha data speranza di espedirlo o con vedere il signor Duca o senza vederlo. Però lui crede non haverlo a vedere. Hiersera gionse qua il signor Marcoantonio Colonna in posta all'improvviso e andò a Pallazzo e intese che il signor Prencipe [Francesco] non v'era, che era ito a caccia, et senza smontare si risolse andare a Castello a trovare il signor Duca, dove stette un'hora. Ho inteso che fece riverenza a sua eccellentia et ragionò con lei, però non potendo rispondere più che tanto lo rimesse al signor Prencipe, et cosi detto signor Marcoantonio se ne ritornò a smontare a Pallazzo dove fu alloggiato, e ritornato che fu il signor Prencipe stettero insieme rittirati gran pezzo, et stamane è partito a buon'hora per Roma, et altro non ho potuto intendere ne meno lo potuto vedere; si dice che è venuto bene espedito da Sua Maiestà. Stamane il signor Prencipe è ito a Castello a buon hora, si crede per questa venuta del signor Marcoantonio, per conferirne con sua eccellentia. Il Presidente di Romagna ha mandato per commissione di Sua Santità [Pope Gregory XIII] a donare a loro eccellentie quindici Turchi per mettere sforzati su le galere, li quali furno presi su quello di Ravenna che erano su una galeotta che dette in Terra, et dicono che sono tutti bravi huomeni et che questa galeotta era venuta in questi paesi per pigliar lingua delle cose di qua. Questa Serenissima Signora Principessa [Giovanna] sta pur in proposito di volere andare alla Madonna del Oreto, il Cavaliero Saracino è venuto da Siena per essere maior d'huomo in questa gita et ha principiato a fare la lista della committiva. Si dice che andará in gran pompa. Sua Altezza [Giovanna] ha lasciato il bruno et si è vestita di turchino e bianco per voto. Questo signor Nuntio da pochi di in qua ha hauti tre Corrieri da Roma et ha

fatto un grande negoziare con questo signor Prencipe et una mattina faceva grand'istanza et voleva parlare a sua eccellentia mentre che era nel letto, però non so che sorte di negotio passa fra loro. Ho inteso che il signor Don Pietro piglia per Compadre a battezzare il suo bambino il serenissimo signor Don Giovanni d'Austria, et per comare la Serenissima Signora Duchessa di Mantova [Eleonora d'Austria], et questo è quanto che io posso dire per hora a Vostra eccellentia Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bascio le mani et prego il signor iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 4 April 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Di Firenze il di 4 di Aprile 1573.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio et Padrone osservandissimo, Vostra eccellentia Illustrissima intenderà come il signor Bonifacio, gentilhuomo del signor Duca di Savoia, si partì satisfatto e contento, havendo ottenuto tutto quello che haveva chiesto a questi Signori, et dipoi esser spedito se n'andò a Castello a fare riverentia al signor Duca [Cosimo], il quale gli rispose doe parole che non furono intese perche in effetto sua eccellentia non può parlare, bene è vero che alcuni dicono la mattina digiuno s'intende qualche parola; e così va vivendo e penando ancorche li Medici dichino che vi è qualche miglioramento, che potria vivere ancora qualche di non vi sopragionendo cosa nuova. Il signor Prencipe [Francesco] hora fa ogni cosa et se bene va alle volte a Castello a vedere sua eccellentia vi sta poco perche non negotiano insieme, solo gli fa riverenza et si fa vedere e poi se ne ritorna. La Serenissima signora Principessa [Giovanna] va tutta via mettendosi al ordine per andare alla Madonna del oreto, et vi andará con Sua Altezza la signora Donna Lionora et il signor Don Pietro, li quali hora sono alloggiati in Pallazzo et mangiano continuamente con il signor Principe et con Sua Altezza, et le Damigelle della signora Donna Lionora mangiano con quelle di Sua Altezza dimodo che perinsino hora fanno tutti una casa e tutti una spesa. Sua Altezza haveva invitata la signora Donna Isabella andare seco, però non si è risoluta di volere andare dicendo che voleva prima scrivere al signor Paolo a Roma. Mi vien detto che Sua Altezza non vuole toccare il stato di Urbino, et dice per non dargli spesa, ma che andará per il stato della Chiesa et si tiene che questo signor Cardinale habbia andare a Perusa a trovare Sua Altezza per tenerle poi compagnia. Però con tutto questo si tiene per fermo, se il signor Duca peggiorasse et che stasse in pericolo, che Sua Altezza non andaria et anco per questa causa le cose vanno adagio. Hieri gionse qua il Duca di gravina parente del signor Paolo Giordano. La signora Donna Isabella lo mandò ad incontrare da molti gentilhuomeni et l'ha alloggiato in casa sua; starà qui dommani et poi se ne va in Lombardia, et questo è quanto mi trovo degno di Vostra eccellentia Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bascio le mani, et prego il signor iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 11 April 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Di Firenze il di xi di Aprile 1573.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio et padrone osservandissimo, Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima intendera come alli 6 di questo, questo signor Principe [Francesco] hebbe la nuova della pace fatta fra i signori Vinetiani e il Turco, la quale portò un Corriero espresso espedito dal suo Agente residente in Venetia, et io andando a spasso in Cocchio incontrai sua eccellenza la quale mi mandò uno suo staffiero a darmi questa nuova et io ringratiai sua eccellenza del favore, dicendo che me ne doleva per il danno che ne potrebbe ricevere la Christianità. Il di seguente gionse un Corriero espedito da Sua Santità [Gregory XIII] a questo Nuntio il quale andò di subito a negoziare con sua eccellenza et io ritrovandomi quivi domandai a Sua Signoria se Sua Santità haveva ancora intesa questa nuova, et mi disse no. Però negotiò alongo con la prefata sua eccellenza la quale il di dipoi espedì il Secretario Concino a Roma in posta, si crede per sapere la mente di Sua Santità intorno a queste sue gallere et forse altri negotij che non si possono sapere. Dipoi s'intese per l'ultime di Roma che Sua Santità ha hauta molto a sdegno di questa pace et che non vuole ascoltare l'Ambasciatore de signori Venetiani più che tanto. Di poi è passato un Corriero che va in Spagna espedito dall'Ambasciatore Catolico residente in Roma. Questa Serenissima Signora Principessa [Giovanna] dice voler partire questa settimana che viene. Intendo che haverà con lei intorno a 200 cavalli fra huomeni e donne, oltre una Compagnia di 60 Cavalli leggieri, che l'accompagneranno. Vedrò poi di havere la lista della Committiva e la mandarò a Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] si trova ancora a Castello nel medemo termine piu tosto con miglioramento che altramente, et li Medici sono in speranza che non sopravvenendovi nuovo accidente potrebbe vivere tutta questa estate, però insin' hora non negotia ne fa cosa alcuna. Il signor Don Luigi di Toletto dopoi la partita del signor Don Gratia suo fratello è risoluto ancor lui volersi partire di qua per andare a stare a Napoli, e intendo che compera il Ducato di Ferrandina per 100m Δ .di delli quali ne cava gran parte di qua, et ha venduta la bella fonte che haveva fabricata qua nel suo giardino con tante figure e marmi alla Città di Palermo 20 m Δ .di dandogliela condotta a suo rischio e spese, et a quest' hora l'ha disfatta et in cassata per inviarla. Ha poi venduto il giardino lasciandogli pur un'altra fonte con molti marmi alla Signora Camilla moglie del signor Duca per 15m Δ .di però non ne viene se non 10m e 400 in mano di detto signore rispetto a certi debbiti che vi erano sopra. Sua eccellenza quando si concluse l'accordo di Siena gli assignò 3m scudi di provisione sopra la

Dogana l'anno in vita sua et hora intendo che S.S. si vuole componere con il signor Prencipe che gli dia un tanto et che sia finita questa sua provisione, et finito che haverà questi suoi negotij se ne andará con animo di non ci tornare forse mai più et tanto più che intendo che si parte con sdegno, parendogli forse che loro eccellenze non habbino tenuto quel conto che pareva a lui meritare. È stato 25 anni qua per quanto S.S. mi disse hieri et mi ha sempre mostrata grandissima affettione. Per la littera che mi scrive il signor Pigna intorno alle casse de Marmi et de libri che sono ritenuti in questa Dogana ho fatto il bisogno con questi Ufficiali, li quali hanno lassate andare tutte le casse de libri senza pagare gabella havendone vista sol una; hora de marmi dicono che hanno a pagare la gabella et che vogliono aprirle tutte per vederle et stimarle et secondo il precio che saranno stimate, giudicaranno quanto si ha a pagare di gabella. Però non ho voluto che si movino sintantoche non ho parlato con sua eccellenza come io voglio fare per intendere la mente sua et poi se sua eccellentia vorà che si paghi, farò pagare, non volendo però chiedergliene gratia perche mi parerebbe troppo meschinità. Basterà sapere la mente sua et del successo ne darò poi aviso a Vostra Eccellentia Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bascio le mani, et prego il signor iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 18 April 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Di Fiorenza il di xviii di Aprile 1573.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio et Padrone osservandissimo, stamane questa serenissima Signora Principessa [Giovanna], dopoi havere udita la messa alla Nuntiata, è montata in lettiga et si è incaminata per andare alla Madonna de Loreto con questa Committiva che vedrà Vostra Eccellentia Illustrissima nell'incluso Ruolo, accompagnata poi insino fuori della porta dal signor Don Pietro con la signora Dona Lionora sua consorte et signora Dona Lisabella e da questo Nuntio, da Ambasciatori e da molti gentilhuomeni, et dopoi essersi licenciati, questi signori cio è il signor Don Pietro, la signora Dona lionora e la signora Dona lisabella sono iti a Castello a visitare il signor Duca [Cosimo], il quale per quanto intendo con questi tempi dolorosi è peggiorato e va penando e aspettando che il Signor Iddio lo tiri a miglior vita. Il signor Principe [Francesco] non ha accompagnato Sua Altezza, anzi non si è mosso da Pallaggio. Delle cose del Mondo qua al presente non si ragiona di cosa alcuna, eccetto che questa pace fatta da Venetiani con il Turco è dispiaciuta a ognuno. Il Signor Don Pietro e la signora Dona Lionora non sono iti a Loreto con Sua Altezza ritrovandosi il signor Duca nel termine che si trova. Io parlai con questo signor Principe dicendogli che gli Doganieri non volevano lassar passare certe casse di Marmi che erano di Vostra Eccellentia Illustrissima senza pagar'gabella, però se questa era mente di Sua Eccellentia la farei pagare molto volentieri. Sua Eccellentia mi disse che io le dessi un poco di memoria, come io feci, dipoi Sua Eccellentia ha ordinato che siano lassate andare senza pagare cosa alcuna e postdomani si inviaranno alla volta di Ferrara e questo è quanto ho da dire a Vostra eccellentia Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bascio le mani et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

[Together with this letter he includes a list of the people who went with Gio as follows]:

Adi xviii di Aprile 1573.

Ruolo di quelli che sono andati a Loreto a servire Sua Altezza Serenissima:

Il Vescovo d'Arezzo

Monsignor d'Altopasso

Il Commendator Petrucci

Il Signore Alfonso d'Appiano d'Aragona

Il Signore ottavio de Bardi signor di Vernio
Il Signor Horatio de Marchesi del Monte
Il Signor Averardo de Medici
il s.r Troilo orsino
il s.r Pietro Iacopo dalla staffa
il s.r Girolamo Fregoso
il s.r Fran.co somma con 36 celate
e tutti questi s.ri e prelati con le loro famiglie e carriaggi [?] che stanno con S.A.
Il s.r Conte di Bagno et Marchese di Montebello
Il s.r Conte Polidoro Castelli
Il Commendator Sar.no(=Saracino) Maiord'huomo
M. Aless.ro Neroni
M. Abramo Thedesco Coppieri
il Cavalier Cesio d'Amenio scalco
M. Ottavio Conti Trinciante
M. Nicolò Soldani Tesaurieri
M. Jacopo Marchesetti medico fisico
M. Piero Galetti Cirusico; M. Alessandro segni furiero con suoi aiuti
il Confessore di S.A. Ser.ma
un Capellano
M. Gioanni Talenti di Camera di S.A.S.ma
il Trombetta di S.Altezza
M. Rocco portieri
Melcher mozzo di Camera
Tutti con loro aiuti et ser.vir proporcionati
lo scrivano di S.Altezza
M. Lodovico Petribelli scalco delle Dame
Fran.co Mariozzo per M.ro di Stalla
M.ro Domenico Mariscalco
Gentilhuomini della bocca:
Don Filippo Viliega
il Conte Iacomo Scotti
m. Camillo delli albizi
m. Aless.ro Arighi

m. Gioanni Thedesco

M. Lorenzo Gondi

il s.r Melchior Pinelli

il s.r Salustio Saracino

Tre sposi cioe' il Barone Battaglini, l'Arighi et il s.r Pompiglio tolomei

Dodici paggi di livrea per il servitio con M. Aless.ro loro Mastro

Dodici stafieri di livrea per la staffa

Quattro littighieri di livrea con quattro lettighe

M. Filippo de Nerli gentilhuomo fiorentino

M. Giuliano gondi

M. Gio Battista Ciati

il Cap.no Ant.o da Trento

il Cav.re Aniballe Monaco

m. Aless.ro olivieri

m Bernardo Adimari

Questi hanno chiesto in gratia di far servitu' a S.A. a quali a tutti si provvede come gli altri.

[*next page*]:

Uffitiali privati:

lo spenditore detto lorenzo con suoi aiuti

Credenzieri che sono sette

La Cantina con suo aiuto

La Dispensa che sono cinque

La Cucina che sono sei Cuochi

M.ro di Tinello che sono quattro

Aless.ro et Biella et loro aiuti di guardarobba

Il Circara capo de viturini con suo aiuto

Il fornaio Thedesco

Il Bottiglieri di S.A. con suo aiuto

M. Filippo Lenzi m.ro di casa in questo viaggio

Le dame, et donne di S.Altezza:

La s.ra Contessa di Bagno Maior.ma

Dodice Dame fra Thedesche e Taliane

la s.ra Melstrich Cam.ra

la s.ra Pernichera

l'Andavilla

otto donne di servitio in Ceste

Iacopo Tedesco alla cura di dette ceste

Venti signori alla staffa di dette Dame

Il Proposto de Tedeschi con trenta Thedeschi a piedi allabardieri

Famegli di stalla necessari a detti Cavalli

Si fa giudicio che saranno circa ducento cinquanta Cavalli fra tutti

Saranno Muli cento o piu' fra chariaggi, e lettighe

Viaggio:

Da Fiorenza a Lancisa a desinare

a dormire a Montevarchi

Arezzo per desinare e a cena

a Castiglione a desinare, a Cortona a cena

Alla Maggione a desinare, a Perugia a cena

Alli Angioli a desinare e a Fuligno a cena

A Colle Fiorito a desinare e a Tolentino a cena

A Mazzerata a desinare, a Recanato a dormire, o a Loreto, come piu' piacerà a

S.Altezza ser.ma

Del ritorno non se n'ha certezza.

Letter dated 13 June 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Di Firenze adi 13 di Giugno 1573.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio et Padrone osservandissimo, Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima intenderà come questi signori mandano il signor Troilo Horsino suo gentilhuomo in Francia a rallegrarsi del nuovo Re di Pollonia con quelle Maiestà, et partirà domattina e insin hora non si è fatta allegrezza alcuna per questa causa come si suol fare, ancorche io creda che loro eccellenze habbiano hauta cara questa elettione; e Tartanicco corriero è partito per Alemagna con un Moro et una Mora, dui leoni et dui bistri, et intendo che va a presentarli al serenissimo Arciduca Carlo. Ho inteso che il serenissimo signor Don Gioanni ha chiesto le dodeci gallere et le doe galleazze a questi signori, et che loro eccellenze gli hanno risposto che gli daranno sei gallere, essendo il resto disarmate e che saria impossibile armarle più a tempo, e pur volendo le due galleazze armate senza ciurma, che gliele daranno; si dice che detto signor Don Gioanni vuole Far' impresa in Ponente. Nostro signore ha licenziato questo Nuntio per mandarne un altro il quale è vescovo genovese nipote del Cardinale cicala et questo pensa partire di qua a tre di per quanto sua santità Reverendissima mi ha detto. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] va migliorando, et si lascia vedere ogni di o nel cocchio o su la seggiola. Giovedì Sua Altezza [Giovanna] fece festa in palazzo con invito di alcune gentildonne et fece la sposa una sua Damigella sorella di messer Hieronimo da Volterra Coppiere del signor Principe [Francesco], et l'ha data a un figliolo di messer Gioanni Arighi che sta al governo delle signore Principesse; vi furono tutti questi signori et signore eccetto il signor Duca et la signora Camilla, però stettero ambidui a una Fenestra del Coridore a vedere venire le gentildonne a Palazzo, et questo è quanto posso dire per hora a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale più humilmente posso bascio le mani, et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo Conegrani.

Fascicolo 6 dated 1573:

Letter dated 24 October 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da Fiorenza a xxiiii di ottobre 1573.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor mio, et padrone osservandissimo,

Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima intenderà come a xviii di questo passò di qua uno Corriero espedito dal serenissimo signor Don Gioanni in Ispagna per dar nuova a Sua Maestà [Philip II] come alli ii[?] di questo Sua Altezza era partita dalla fabiana isola di la da Trappani per andare a Tunisi et che l'haveva visto incaminato con tutta l'armata con buon tempo. Dipoi non se n'è inteso altro sin hora et per lettere di Napoli si è inteso che a x di questo su le galere di Sua Santità [Gregory XIII] et di Savoia in numero 4 s'era imbarcato il signor Marc'Antonio Colonna, con il signor Prospero et il signor Pompeo, il signor Principe di Parma et il signor Michele bonelli et che andavano a trovare Sua Altezza [Don Giovanni d'Austria]. Qui si sta tuttavia in feste havendo maritate Sua Altezza [Giovanna] tre delle sue Dame, due Tedesche et una Senese, le quali Tedesche sono le ultime che non ve ne resta più da maritare; una che si chiama Leonora ha preso uno Barone Napolitano, della quale si fece giovedì passato il suo sposalitio et nozze in Palazzo con un banchetto solenne et festa, che si ballò doppo magnare sino alla sera, che si fece in ultimo una bellissima collattione di confetture et con questo fu licenziato ognuno che andò a casa sua. Vi furono tutti questi signori con Monsignor Illustrissimo Paceco, Nuntio et Ambasciatori et oltre le donne di casa Sua Altezza convitò di molte gentildonne della città, et domani si farà le nozze dell'altra Tedesca, che non mi sovienne il nome, la quale piglia il Barone Princistà Coppiero di Sua Altezza. Si farà poi anco le nozze della Senese nipota del Cavaliere Saracino già Maiordomo, la quale è maritata a un gentilhuomo pur senese. La signora Donna Isabella non vi si è trovata per essere nel letto con un poco di febre causata da cattarro, però sta meglio, et si spera che non haverà male. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] seguita ancora quella bevanda dicendo che ne sente giovamento, però secondo il dir delli altri sta secondo il suo solito. A questi di ritornò il signor Pier Antonio da Vernia di Alemagna, et lui mi ha detto esser'stato dal Duca Claves et dal Duca di Sassonia et non in altro luogo, et questo è quanto mi trovo degno di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bascio le mani, et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo conegrani.

Letter dated 26 October 1573: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da Fiorenza A xxvi di ottobre 1573.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signore mio et padrone osservandissimo.

Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima haverà inteso quanto le ho scritto per l'ordinario passato, però hora le dico che hier mattina si fecero le nozze e sponsalitie del Princestano con quella Tedesca Dama di Sua Altezza [Giovanna] et parimente quelle della nipota del Cavaliere Saracino pur Dama di Sua Altezza perche prefata Sua Altezza si risolse farle ambedue a un tratto, per uscir più tosto di questo impaccio; et qua è comparso un Tedesco il quale è cognato di detto Princistano per havere una sorella di questa Tedesca che egli ha preso, il quale doveva venir in qua per ritrovarsi a queste nozze et detto Princestano ha operato con Sua Maestà cesarea [Maximilian II] che voglia Fargli gratia di Fargli quest'honore, che questo huomo rapresenti la persona sua a queste nozze, come ha ottenuto; però questo gentilhuomo è venuto qua senza portar lettere al signor Duca [Cosimo], ne meno al signor Principe [Francesco], ma intendo che ne ha portate a Sua Altezza la quale l'ha accettato come Ambasciatore di Sua Maestà et l'ha fatto alloggiare in casa del Vescovo Antinori, et il signor Principe non havendo havute lettere ha mostrato di nonne saper' niente ne meno si è voluto ritrovare alle nozze ne al desinare ne a cosa alcuna ne ha voluto intendere niente di dare i luoghi ne altro et se n'è lavate le mani in tutto e pertutto et ne ha lasciata la cura totalmente a Sua Altezza. Detto Princestano ha poi fatto venir lettere dal serenissimo Arciduca Carlo et dal signor Duca di Sassonia et dal signor Duca di Baviera et dalla signora Duchessa di Mantua a questi gentilhuomeni che vedrà Vostra Eccellenza posti per ordine alla tavola, quale sarà qui inclusa, et tutti hanno fatto donativo alla sposa in nome di quei Principi che rappresentano, et detto Princistà ha operato d'haver questo honore per haver'anco l'utile, il che, per quanto ho potuto intendere et conoscere, è stato più tosto con dispiacere del signor Principe che altrimenti. Io non mi vi sono trovato perche non sono stato invitato da Sua Altezza come fui alle nozze che furono fatte giovedì prossimo passato et hebbi il mio luogo presso il signor Nuntio, però io comparsi la mattina alla Corte per andare accompagnare alla messa sua eccellenza con questi signori Cardinali et vi era anco il signor Nuntio, il quale mi disse non essere ancor lui invitato di nuovo che che credeva che bastasse il primo invito che fu fatto per le nozze che s'intendesse per tutte, però ragionando con quei principali intesi che il signor Principe non ne voleva sapere cosa alcuna, come ho detto di sopra, et che Sua Altezza voleva dare i luoghi principali a questi gentilhuomeni che rapresentavano le persone di questi Duchi, et anco

vi era molta differenza fra loro perche il Tedesco che rapresentava la persona di Sua Maestà diceva voler il luogo fra mezzo i dua Cardinali et il Cavaliere Saracino, che rapresentava il Duca di Sassonia, diceva haver ordine di non rapresentarsi se non haveva il luogo appresso l'Ambasciatore dell'Imperatore sopra l'Arciduca Carlo et doppo lunghe dispute Sua Altezza accommodò in quella maniera che Vostra Eccellenza vedrà nella sopra detta tavola. Io andai alla messa con il signor Principe et signori Cardinali et accompagnatoli insino a palazzo con una grandissima pioggia, che erano in cocchio et parimente io ero nel mio Cocchio, mi risolsi non vi restare et non smontai altrimenti e me ne ritornai a casa per fuggire ogni inconveniente che fusse potuto nascere et tanto più che questa era cosa nuova di questi Ambasciatori in questo modo, delli quali manco havevo visto sue lettere et poi non ero stato invitato di nuovo.

Il signor Nuntio smontò accompagnare detti signori disopra et intendo che vi fu fatto restare come vi stette. L'Ambasciatore di Lucca non vi è intervenuto per non esser stato invitato ne a queste ne a quell'altre nozze; le gentildonne magnorono nel salotto vicino et doppo il banchetto intendo che si fece musiche et che si ballò sin alla sera con la collettione al ultimo, come si fece a quelle altre nozze et tutto è per dare questo avviso a Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto piu humilmente posso bascio le mani, et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

[Included in this letter is a diagram of the seating arrangement for the wedding – see figure 10]:

Capo della tavola *[on the top narrow end of the table]*

On the left of the *capo della tavola* going down towards the bottom:

Mons. Ill.mo Paceco

Mons. Ill.mo de Medici

Il s.r Sforza Apiano da Piombino, che rapresentava la persona del ser.mo Arciduca Carlo

La ser.ma s.ra Principessa

La ecc.ma s.ra Donna Leonora

La sposa saracina

Et lo sposo suo

[on the right hand side of the capo della tavola]:

Mons.r R.mo Nuntio

Uno tedesco che rapresentava la persona di S.M.ta' Cesarea

Il s.r Cav.re Saracino che rapresentava la persona del Duca di Sassonia

il S.r Troilo orsino, che rapresentava la persona del Duca di Baviera

Lo Ill.mo s.r Don Pietor de Medici

Il s.r Conte Clemente Pietro che rapresentava la s.ra Duchessa di Mantua

la sposa tedesca et lo sposo Princestano.

Fascicolo 7 dated 1574:

Letter dated 13 February 1574: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da Fiorenza A di xiii di febraio 1574.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio, et padrone osservandissimo.

Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima intenderà come quattro di sono gionse qua il signor Claudio Gonzaga cameriero di Sua Santità [Gregory XIII], mandato per quanto mi vien detto per negoziare delle cose di Pittigliano, perche Sua Benedizione voria per ogni modo metter da cordo il conte Nicola et signor orso suo figliolo per non vedere romori in Italia et accendere un foco che non si potesse poi spegnere cosi tosto. Il detto signor Claudio ha negoziato col signor Principe [Francesco] et è stato ben visto, però non è ancora spedito et alloggia in casa di questo signor Nuntio; non so quello ne caverà da sua eccellenza ma so bene che molti di sono dettero principio a fortificare saona et tuttavia vi si lavora gagliardamente et è luogo del senese che confina con quello di Pittigliano. È passato di qua doi di sono Monsignor de Grassi che viene di Spagna per la causa che sa vostra Eccellenza; ha fatto riverenza a tutti questi signori et poi se n'è ito alla volta di Roma et parimente è alloggiato col signor Nuntio. Qua s'è inteso che il signor Duca d'Alva era gionto a Turino però non s'havea havuto certezza se si imbarcaria a Genova overo a Nizza di Provenza, però questo signor Cardinale Paceco ha espedito un Corriero per saperne il vero perche Sua Santità Illustrissima, intendendo che vadi a Nizza, hammi detto che se ne vuole tornare a Roma senza vederlo, ma se verà a Genova, che v'andarà. Questi signori haveano fatta elettione del Conte clemente Pietra per mandarlo a far complimento con il detto signor Duca d'Alva, ma il povero gentilhuomo stamane a xiiii hore è piaciuto al signor Dio tirarlo a miglior vita per causa d'una gran ferita c'hebbe tre di sono su una gamba facendo questione con il Cavaliere Somma, capitano della guardia de Cavalli di questi signori. In questo modo sta la cosa: il detto cavaliere molti di sono hebbe querela con il capitano et Cavaliere cavacarne, assai grato a questo signor Principe, della quale non ne reuscì con troppo honore secondo il parere delli più et detto cavaliere si pretendeva che il detto Conte Clemente avesse sparlato di lui et parimente scrittone fuori però senza mostrare mai segno di nemicitia alcuna in detto Conte, anzi gli faceva l'amico; una mattina lo trovò all'improvviso disarmato con una spadina ben piccola che gli serviva per mostra et lui accompagnato da cinque o sei armato quanto poteva essere, lo affrontò et gli disse: conte cacciate mano alla spada, che io voglio far questione con voi, et quelli altri che erano seco si fecero avanti et dissero a un certo soldato vecchio che era col Conte et a

doi suoi servitori: state indrieto et lassateli fare a lor dui, et cosi il detto Conte, come huomo da bene, cacciò mano alla spada et fecero questione et n'hebbe quella cortellata su la gamba che è stato causa della morte sua. Il Cavaliere Somma ancor lui restò un poco ferito, il quale se ne fuggi subito. Il signor Principe ne ha sentito molto dispiacere havendo perso un gentilhuomo delle qualità ch'era il conte Clemente, et se quello altro gli venessi alle mane credo lo faria castigare secondo i suoi meriti. Hora loro Eccellenze faranno elettione d'un altro per mandare a fare il medesimo con il detto signor Duca. Questo signor Cardinale [Ferdinando] dopoi il suo male [a fall from a horse] era risanato assai bene, però questa settimana gli è venuto un poco di febre et gli hanno cavato sangue di nuovo però se ne spera bene. La signora Donna Isabella havendo servito il signor Cardinale in questo suo male ha patito et a lei ancora è venuto un poco di febre con il viso infiato per causa di catarro et non haverà male, et per queste cause il carnevale va freddissimo et tanto più che questa notte all'improvviso è venuto un palmo di neve, che ha dato da fare tutt'hoggi a tutti questi gentilhuomeni, gentildonne et Cittadini, perche con la neve qua si usa più domesticamente et si fa più baie che in luogo del mondo. Pur la signora Principessa [Giovanna] farà fare la commedia alle signore Principesse con le sue donne. L'abattimento della Barriera è differito doppo Pasqua alle nozze della Contessa d'Arco Dama di questa serenissima signora che pigliarà per marito il signor Alfonso da Piombino et andará in volta uno di questi di una bella mascherata con musica ben concertata. Questo signor Duca [Cosimo] sta secondo il suo solito et la maggior parte nel letto et il signor claudio Gonzaga mi disse hieri che non l'havea ancora visitato ma che la voleva visitare prima che partisse, che tanto havea commissione da sua santità. Del resto delle cose del mondo saranno qui inclusi alcuni avisi di Roma. Da Napoli scrivono di più che per lettere di Tunisi intendono che li nostri havevano fatto bottino di 20m capi di bestie et che si trovavano 15m mori alla campagna che infestavano il paese afinche non si potesse seminare ne fare altro bene per utile di quella Città et che il serenissimo signor Don Giovanni andará finalmente in Spagna, et condurà seco il Re di Tunisi che si trova li in Napoli. Et questo è quanto mi trovo degno di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale con ogni riverenza possibile bacio le mani, et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore, Ridolfo conegrani.

Letter dated 27 Feb 1574: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da Fiorenza Adi xxvii di febraio 1574.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio, et patrone osservandissimo.

Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima intenderà come il signor Claudio Gonzaga, il quale fu mandato per le cose di Pittigliano da sua santità [Gregory XIII], si trova ancora qua, ne meno sa quando sarà espedito. Non so che resolutione pigliaranno questi signori; mi viene ben detto che il signor orso si lascia intendere non volere uscire di Pittigliano se non per forza et che più tosto vuole morire che lasciarsi cavar fuori per amore. Intendo che questo signor Cardinale fra pochi di se ne tornerà a Roma. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] sta secondo il suo solito. Del resto delle cose del mondo Vostra eccellenza vedrà nelli inclusi avisi quanto scrivono da Roma. Quanto al carnevale, Sua Altezza [Giovanna] fece recitare la commedia sabbatosera alle sue Dame con l'intervento delle signore Principesse che riuscì molto bene et si corse due volte al saracino con poca spesa de concerti; il signor Principe [Francesco] et il signor Don Pietro hanno corso ancor loro et il lunedì del Carnevale si combatte alla Barriera dove furono tre mantenitori: il signor Troilo orsino, il signor Bellissario simoncelli, et il signor Adoardo Cicala fratello di questo Nuntio, et non hebbero se non 7 venturieri et viddi combattere nella maniera che si combatte qua che a me non piacque punto. Ne il signor Principe ne il signor Don Pietro vi si trovò. Sono poi andate doe mascherate con musiche ben concertate et l'ultima fu di 40 maschare vestite riccamente con belle inventioni che tutta la spesa fu giudicata di 4m scudi. Questa serenissima signora Principessa n'havea vestite sei et quattro il signor Principe et quattro altre il signor Don Pietro et l'altre poi varij gentilhuomeni et fu cosa veramente degna d'esser vista, la quale sarà qui inclusa; et il Carnevale si finì con la commedia di Pedrolino et fra loro signori ballarono tutta la notte senza invito di persona, se bene il signor Nuntio, il signor Claudio Gonzaga et io fummo alla Commedia. Et questo è quanto mi trovo degno di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale con ogni riverenza possibile bascio le mani et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 13 March 1574: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Da fiorenza Adi xiii di Marzo 1574.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patrone mio osservandissimo.

Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima intenderà come il signor Claudio Gonzaga doppo esser stato a Pittigliano se n'andò dilongo a Roma et intendo che il signor orso è risoluto di non si voler muovere di quel luogo senza per forza et tanto, dicono, ha risposto al signor Claudio, però non è tornato più qua come credeva di tornare, havendo lasciato qua le sue valigie in casa del signor Nuntio, le quali hora se gli manderanno a Roma. Il signor Cardinale Paceco stamane è partito per Roma et instivalato ha negoziato con il Concino et con il signor Principe [Francesco] un doppo l'altro più di tre hore et si vedeva che erano negotij d'importanza et ognuno si maravigliava che fussero stati cosi al ultimo della partita sua. Il signor Cardinale de medici non è andato con Sua Santità Illustrissima per non essere all'ordine ma dice volere partir questa settimana che viene. Loro eccellenze hanno disarmate tutte le sue galere et tirate in terra eccetto quattro c'hanno date alla Religione le quali andaranno fuori a buon tempo pur sotto nome di detta Religione. Il signor Duca di Baviera ha mandato un presente qua a loro eccellenze et a Sua Altezza [Giovanna] di xviii cavalli et una cassa con dentro una tavola con tutti li ordini di apparecchiarla in un subito et uno horologio bellissimo et questo Gentilhuomo c'ha fatto il presente ha havuto di donativo colane di 500 scudi l'una. Questa serenissima signora Principessa ha inviato un suo Gentilhuomo alla Madonna da Loreto a farle un'offerta di un bellissimo crucifisso d'argento [by Gianbologna] con sei Candelieri et uno calice d'oro fornito et poi paramenti per cantare una messa et il Vespro di brocato d'oro da 20 scudi il braccio con ricami di perle bellissimi, che ogni cosa insieme vagliono 7m scudi. Qua s'è inteso la morte del signor Adriano baglione con molto dispiacere di sua santità. Il signor Duca [Cosimo] questa settimana è stato più travagliato del solito, però intendo che è ritornato nel medesimo termine et questo è quanto mi trovo degno di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bascio le mani et prego il signor Iddio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore, Ridolfo Conegrani.

Letter dated 22 May 1574: from Conegrani to Alfonso:

Di Fiorenza Adi xxii di maggio 1574.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor mio, et padrone osservandissimo.

Doppo fatte le essequie nel modo ch'io ne scrissi a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima non è successo altro, se non che il di avanti gionse qua il signor Francesco Sauli mandato dalla signoria di Genova a fare ufficio di condoglianza con sua eccellenza et non volendo intravenire a dette essequie non hebbe audienza, se non il di dopoi, però fu alloggiato et accarezzato come gli altri che vi sono stati. Domani Sua Eccellenza [Francesco] con tutti questi signori vanno al Poggio dove staranno quattro o cinque di et faranno le nozze del signor Alfonso da Piombino con la signora Contessa da Arco Dama di Sua Altezza [Giovanna] et questo è quanto m'occorre dir per hora a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima alla quale quanto più humilmente posso bacio le mani et prego il signor Dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima Humilissimo servitore,

Ridolfo conegrani.

Busta 24
Ambasciatore Ercole Cortile

Fascicolo 11 dated 1575:

Letter dated 15 January 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et Padron mio Colendissimo.

La presente mia sarà prima per far' humilissima riverenza a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima et poi per fargli sapere come luni che fu li 10 del presente gionsi a Firenze et fui incontrato di fuori la porta un pezzo da messer Bacchio Tholomei, da messer Giovan Battista Detj, da messer Giovan francesco tovaglia figliolo che fu di un thesoriero del signor Duca, dal Semenza et dal Cavaliero Pagani e subito smontato che fui, fui visitato da un servitore del signor Nuncio in nome suo et da uno dell'Ambasciatore di Luca, gli quali si mandorno à offerirmisi con molte amorevoli e cortese parole. Il giorno seguente venne Monsignor Nuncio in persona a visitarmi, qual è Monsignor Cicada et fa proffessione di esser' molto servitore a Vostra Eccellenza. L'Ambasciatore di Luca si mandò a escusare di non poter' venire per che stava indisposto di un Cattaro fastidioso. Mercoli hebbi udienza da Sua Eccellenza [Francesco] tanto grata che non havrei pottuto imaginar' più e mi venne incontro molti passi partendossi da l'un capo della Camera, sino quasi alla porta, e, lesse la sua lettera con allegrissima faccia E poi mi disse che amava Vostra Eccellenza al pari di ogni altro Parente e che dessiderava occasione di farle servitio, come faria conoscere a me alla giornata in tutte le occasione ch'io gli presentassi e per servitio di lei e per particular' mio. Il giorno seguente visitai la signora Duchessa [Giovanna] dalla quale fui benissimo veduto e interrogato minutamente dell'esser suo, sino delle Mascare che si faceva a Ferrara e come piacevano a Vostra Eccellenza e mi disse che gli pareva strano che non si faccessero anco in Firenze, essendo di tanto piacere e di tanta libertà. Nel partire mi commando che in tutte le occorenze io ricoressi da lei, acciò potesse far conoscere a Vostra Eccellenza quanto l'amava e quanto lo teneva per caro parente; parla molto bene Italiano e quando dà udienza, la dà solla lontano dalle sue Dame et da suoi servitori. Visitai poi il medemo giorno il signor Don Pedro dal qual fui molto ben visto e molto accarezzato e mi disse che ringratiava Vostra Eccellenza del favore che gli faceva in tener memoria di Lui che gli è tanto affetionato servitore per molti aspeti. Non ho anco pottuto visitare la signora Donna Isabella ancor' che io habbi usato molta diligenza et si è iscusata che essendo un poco indisposta non può darmi udienza sino Domenica, ma mi

son chiarito da gente pratiche delle cose che è solita a far' così con tutti e che non vuol essere visitata se non stà in tutta perfettione e' questo mi ha detto il signor Theodoro Bardi che è pratico di casa. Non ho visitato la signora Donna Leonora moglie di Don Pedro, per non haver' lettere, ancor'che io sia stato consigliato a visitarla da quelli che fanno professione di esser' servitori a Vostra Eccellenza, gli quali sono molti in questa città. Della Corte poi di firenze ne posso dar' poco ragualio a Vostra Eccellenza per esser' così poco ch'io gli sono, ma per quanto ho pottuto conoscere mi par' poco frequentata. Della vita che tiene il signor Duca ne posso dar' anco poco raguaglio, non essendo ben informato de tutti i particolari, solo gli dirò che si leva la mattina a buon' hora da lato di Sua Altezza e viene abbasso nelle sue Camere et entra in un altro leto dove sta negoziando co' suoi sechretarij e suoi Ministri sino alle diciotto hore, poi si veste e, vestito che è, se ne va fuori in cocchio con doi o tre gentilhuomini e un paro di staffieri e da una volta per la città e se ne torna a disnare; doppo havere mangiato subito se ne monta in cocchio con simile compagnia e va a un suo cascino nel qual ha lambichi, Minere, molte Gioie e Gioelieri e Mastri che lavoran di Christali et altre cose et vi se resta sino a sera dove anco molte volte da audienza a forestieri e negocia co' suoi sechretarij e suoi Ministri, poi partendossi di li da una volta e se ne torna a casa e gionto subito fa licentiar suoi Gentilhuomini e Camerieri e si ritira, ma non si sa a che per quel che mi dicono; questo è quanto per hora gli posso dire intorno a questo particolare, meglio informato ne darò più minuto ragualio a Vostra Eccellenza com'ella mi comandò. Messer Lorenzo Guicciardini mi è stato a visitare et mi ha fatto molte amorevole offerte ma io non gli credo, essendo anco informato di sua conditione da questi di questa terra et in particolare da messer Bacchio Tholomeo, il qual fa professione di esser' molto servitore a Vostra Eccellenza e molto mio amico. Il detto Guicciardini mi ha voluto cominciare a essaminare delle cose di ferrara perche lui fa professione di avisar' il signor Duca di firenze di tutte le cose di la ma molte volte, per quel che mi vien deto, gli dice molte carote che gli vengon schritti, ma col tempo me ne chiarirò meglio. Credo che s'imaginava ch'io fossi corivo e molto pronto al lasso di lingua ma credo di non gli essere riuscito tale, poi che non mi vien a visitare come mi havea deto di venir' ogni giorno e mostra di esser' stato molto intriseo e molto domestico col Conegrano ma non credo che riuscirà molto domestico con me, se però Vostra Eccellenza non me lo comandarà. Qui era stato scritto, per far' saperli ogni cosa, ch'io non veniva più, per essermi spaventato dalla spesa, e l'Ambasciatore Cannigiano me lo disse prima ch'io mi partissi e mi è stato confermato qui dal Guicciardini. Chi

l'habbia scritto io non lo so, ma m'Imagino che sia stato il Connegrano, per che tutti mi dicono e gli suoi servitori medemi che ho ritrovato ancor' qui, che si è partito molto mal volontieri ma che domandò licenza a Vostra Eccellenza si per esser' pagato, si anco per haver' Mile scudi di provigione come gli paria meritare. Vostra Eccellenza non mi habbi per maligno s'io gli dirò sempre ogni cosa alla libera, per che a me pare che l'offitio del buon servitore habbi ad esser' talle, e faccio ancora saperli che lui per quel che mi dicono esuoi non mi vuol molto bene per esser' venuto io in qua, e prima ch'io partissi da ferrara mi mandò a dire per uno dei miei servitori ch'io havea mandato a Mantova da lui per certe robbe ch'io volea comperar' qui del suo, ch'io guardassi come facea, per che ancor' ch'io havessi d'entrata Mille scudi delmio, ch'io gli spenderei oltre la provisione di Vostra Eccellenza. Tutto ho voluto farle sapere acciò sappia che non ha mancato di far'molti mali officij con me e per me, e credo che havrebbe anco fatto il simile per ogn'altro che fosse stato elletto da Vostra Eccellenza in questa Ambascieria, havendo lui dessiderio di ritornarvi, ma ho fato io bene per lui molto il contrario, parendomi che cosi comporti l'honesto et insieme il servitio di lui. Il sechretario Concino a il quale ho fatto fede quanto Vostra Eccellenza l'ami mi ha pregato ch'io voglia fargli humilissima riverentia in nome suo, e insieme farli fede che come devotissimo servitore che gli è dessidera ch'ella gli comandi in tutte le occasioni che lo conoscerà buono a servirla, e prometo a Vostra Eccellenza ch'io l'ho ritrovato altr'huomo di quello che me lo dipingevano qui per che mi dicevano ch'era huomo Austero et io l'ho ritrovato molto affabile e di molta bella creanza. Delle nuove di queste bande non gli scrivo alcuna cosa si per non gli n'essere si anco per esser'stato alquanto occupato in queste visite, ma da qui inanzi non mancarò di usar' diligenza per intenderne più che potrò e gli ne darò raguaglio. La supplico bene a perdonarmi se alcuna volta gli sarò troppo lungo e tedioso in scriverle ogni cosa minutamente perche tutto farò per servirla et obedirla. Il Conte Francesco di Novelara è arivato qui a servir' il Signor Duca per Gentilhuomo però senza grado nissuno, si dice però con buona provisione, chi dice dua mila scudi che dua e cinquecento, altri dicono tremila. Ha condoto qui una Donna con altre Donne chi dice ch'è sua moglie e chi dice che è sua femina, ma se è sua femina havrà fatto bene a condurla per rimedio delle Podagre. Io non l'ho visitato per che lui non ha visitato me. Si aspetava ancor' qui il signor Prospero Collona molti mesi fanno per servir' questa Eccellenza ma par che la cosa si sia raffredata e non si sa per hora il certo. La Contessa da Pietra moglie che fu del Conte Chlemente e sorella del quistelo e insieme sua Madre m'hanno pregato ch'io voglia far'

humilissima riverenza a Vostra Eccellenza in nome loro e insieme fargli sapere che come serve devotissime ne loro bisogni, ricorrerano più presto da lei che da niun'altro suo signore sperando di esser' più presto favorite da Lei che da nissun'altro. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro parendomi haverla fastidita troppo a Vostra Eccellenza humilissimamente bascio le mani, supplicandola a tenermi nella sua buona gratia la qual dessidero sopra ogn'altra cosa.

Di Firenze gli 15 Zenaro 1575.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 29 January 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Mi fu dato hieri l'altro una lettera di Vostra Eccellenza data in Reggio li xxi Dicembre nella quale mi comanda ch'io facci liberare dalla Galera Felice dalla Rocca, suo suddito Reggiano, perciò ho fatto subito, conforme all'Intentione sua, commetere che sia liberato. Delle nuove poi di questa corte non ne scrivo hora a Vostra Eccellenza per esser' il signor Duca [Francesco] a Castelo a cazza di lepre et capri et di Ragna, et non verrà sino dimani. Il Nuncio di sua santità Partirà da Luni a otto per Roma e non sa per quel che mi ha deto quando tornerà. Qui si attende a passer il Carnevale con le Comedie del Zani e col giuoco del Calcio e non con altri piaceri, et il signor Duca va spesso a dette Comedie nella Camera publica però sopra un palco ritirato, qual ha fatto fare in luoco che non può esser visto. La signora Duchessa [Giovanna] ne fa far ancho lei di molte in Palazzo, però il signor Duca non gli Interviene mai per esser' in quell'ora occupato in altri suoi piaceri, gli quali, per quel che mi ha detto il Padre Panicarecola, danno tanto travaglio alla signora Duchessa che resta molto mal satisfata. Il predeto Padre mi ha pregato ch'io voglia far' humilissima riverenza a Vostra Eccellenza in nome suo e farli fede che gli è devotissimo servitore e che dessidera occasione di servirla come è obbligato per tutti i rispeti e certo che è huomo degno di essere estimado e con il suo mezzo si può sapere molte cose. Prima che Vostra Eccellenza mi havesse fatto favore di accetarmi a suo servitio, Io procuravo di havere una Croce di Portugalo, ma hora non seguitarò più oltre s'io non so che ella se ne contenti, però la supplico a farmene dar'aviso per che se la si contenterà io seguitarò oltre, se no io mi ritirarò con molta buona volontà, riputandomi esser' in tutti modi Cavaliero honorato essendo fatto degno per gratia di servir' un Principe tanto grande com'è Vostra Eccellenza, alla quale pregando dal signor Iddio quella suprema felicità che noi altri suoi servitori dessideriamo humilmente bascio le mani et in sua gratia da me sopra ogn'altra cosa dessiderato mi raccomando.

Di Firenze li xxviii Gennaro M.D.L.xxv.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 8 Feb 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Il Cardinale Borromeo il qual gionse qui sabato come havrà inteso Vostra Eccellenza dal secretario Pigna et partì Luni per Lombardia, mi comandò quando il visitai ch'io Basciassi le mani a Vostra Eccellenza in nome suo e ch'io glielo raccordassi per molto servitore. Non voglio mancar' ancor' di darle conto, com'ella mi comandò, di quella Donna [Bianca Cappello] o per dir' meglio Innamorata del signor Duca [Francesco] poi che non è pericolo che le lettere, con l'occasione di un mio fidato qual mando a Ferrara, vadino in sinistro. La saprà adunque che questa Donna si chiama la signora Bianca Capeli et è Venetiana e non bella ne li vicina et è tanto amata da questo signore che può ogni cosa in questo stato et e causa per quel che mi ha deto il Padre Panigaruola che la signora Duchesa resti molto mal soddisfata e mal contenta e Lui lo può saper' molto bene peresser' molto Intrinseco e domestico di sua Altezza, e dico a Vostra Eccellenza che la fanno tanto alla scoperta che ne fanno accorgere ogn'uno per forestiero e nuovo che sia in queste parti per che' tutti gli giorni delle feste lei si ritrova sempre alla messa del signor Duca e stà sempre d'Incontro a Sua Eccellenza e credo di più che il signor Duca non vadi mai a messa sin tanto che no sà che lei sia in chiesa, essendo sempre prima che si parti di Palazzo dieciotto e diecinove hore, et Ivi non fanno mai altro che vaghegiarsi l'un l'altro e procedono come se fossero Innamorati che non si godessero, di maniera che danno molto che dire al Popolo. La signora Marchesa di Citona [Eleonora Cibo] mi ha dato ragualio della causa che ha fatto venir' Pazza la signora Camila moglie che fu del Duca Cosmo e mi ha deto che subito c'hebbe spirato, il Duca nuovo la fece condurre per il Corbolo e per la sbiraglia come se fosse stata una trista nelle Monache murate, e che per il spavento che hebbe diventò Pazza e non peca in altro humore se non che le pare di haver' sempre intorno il Corbolo e gli Biri e questo, per quel ch'ella mi dice, lo fece il s.r Duca per non le haver' a dar' gli quatrocento scudi che le lasso per testamento il marito ogni mese e me ha deto di più che per molti giorni fece star' la sbiralia intorno al Monastero delle Murate per dar' Indicio che questa signora fosse una trista, e la detta Marchesa parla molto liberamente, si per esser' libera di sua natura, si anco per quel ch'io vego molto mal soddisfata de questi signori e di questi paesi. Mi ha ancor' deto che Donna Isabela si corociò molto con Vostra Eccellenza per che per una volta che le scrisse, non la trattò di Sua Eccellenza et non le volse per questo rispondere, il che ancor' ch'io creda ch'ella lo sappi, non ho volsuto però restare di darline aviso. Ho trovato anche qui la signora Donna Leonora di toledo moglie del signor Don Pietro

quela così bella signora molto mal soddisfata per causa che suo marito, per quel che mi dicono, non ne fa conto alcuno e non dorme con lei anzi la disprezza molto, attendendo solo a Putane et altre cose più viciose e dico a Vostra Eccellenza che ella ha detto a me che si trova la più sfortunata Principessa e la più mal contenta che viva e par' qui a molti che le sia fatto un gran torto Per esser' così bella e così qualificata signora. Ho trovato ancor' qui Monsignor Guidi il qual è segretario molto mal soddisfatto et ha detto a me che il Concino ha cercato di Abbassarlo, di maniera che l'ha abbassato tanto che non fa più nulla. Ho trovato ancor' un'altro il qual è mio amico sino in Ispagna che si chiama Honofrio Rosseli ancor' lui segretario tanto mal soddisfatto quanto io m'habbi mai visto nissun'servitore e questo lo posso accertare a Vostra Eccellenza per che lo so da lui stesso et mi ha detto che ha hauto parole molte brute et molte fastidiose co'l Concino per più cause e particolarmente per che il signor Duca le havea comandato un negotio che non lo conferisse con nessuno se non con Sua Eccellenza e per quel che mi dice il negotio era col Duca di savoia ma il particolare non lo so et il Concino le fece rompere l'Armario nella Cancellaria e gli fece rubare certi capitoli e certe lettere, di maniera che il detto Rosseli disse queste parole presente detto Concino: chi me ha fatto rompere questo Armario non può essere se non un Beco e un furfante, et altre parole Ingiuriose e non le fu risposto nula e qui si crede se il Concino morisse che questo sarebbe il primo huomo c'havesse il Duca per esser'huomo attivo, di buone lettere et molto garbato, ma se le cose vanno come hanno incominciate credo che lui si licentierà per quel che mi ha accenato per esser'huomo molto libero et huomo che non può patir' di esser' oppresso di questa maniera. Questo havrei scritto tutto in Ziffara se non fosse che non è pericolo che la lettera capiti in sinistro non andando in mane ne di Corrieri ne d'altri se non di questo mio Fidato. Qui si dice pubblicamente che il signor Duca di Mantua è stato creato gran Duca da sua Maestà Cesarea et gli n'è molto che dire. Il Principe di Chleves, per quel che mi ha detto il signor Duca, stà meglio e potria essere che fusse qui presto et mi ha detto Sua Eccellenza che l'Incesce che sia tempo di Duolo per non poter' far' feste et altre cose, ma che lo trattenerà con Caccie molte belle de Porci et de Capri. Monsignor Nuntio partì Luni per Roma et ha lasciato però qui parte della Casa e dice che tornerà, ma chi pensa che sì e chi nò, la non si sa certo. Questo è quanto per hora mi occorre dirle di nuovo; Vostra Eccellenza mi perdonerà s'io non le scriverò molto spesso avvisi per che le cose di questa corte vanno molto frede, per quel che ho pottuto veder' sin' hora, pur'io non mancarò di usar' tutta la diligenza che potrò per haver' occasione di scriverle spesso. La signora Marchesa di Citona, qual è moglie del signor Chiapin Vitteli me ha

detto ch'io Bascia le mani di Vostra Eccellenza in nome suo e che io gliela offerisca per affetionatissima serva. Il secretario Concino mi ha tornato a pregar' pur stamani ancor Lui ch'io le faccia humilissima riverenza in nome suo e ch'io le faccia offerta di tutto quel che lui vale e certo che mostra di esser' molto servitore a Vostra Eccellenza alla quale pregando dal signor Iddio quella felicità e quello accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi servitori dessideriamo humilmente,

Bascio le mani et in gratia mi raccomando.

Di Firenze a viii Febraro M.D.L.xxv.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 17 February 1575: Cortile to Alfonso:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Con la presente occasione mi occorre farle sapere come la signora Donna Isabella stà con la febre continua molti giorni sono et ancor' che sia febre un poco lenta però a molti non pare che sia male così legiero; si levò nondimeno il luni sera di Carnevale e si fece portare in Palazzo a veder' rapresentare una Pastorale qual fece Sua Altezza [Giovanna] recitare dalle sue Dame e certo che fu cosa assai bella. Io la visitai e mi comandò che baciassi le mani in nome suo a Vostra Eccellenza e ch'io le faccesse fede che l'ama molto e desidera occasione di servirla; sua Altezza poi stà alquanto di mala voglia per la morte del Principe di Chleves, La quale havrà forse inteso Vostra Eccellenza per altra parte. Messer Bacchio Tholomei mi ha pregato ch'io le faccia humilissima riverenza in nome suo et le prometo che fa professione di esserle tanto devoto servitore e tanto obbligato che non si può Immaginar' più; a me pare che si doglia un pocco che essendo solito in ferrara per gli altri mercanti che si paghi le gabelle di tre in tre mesi, come soleva far'ancor'lui, che hora vogliano che le paghi di volta in volta, come se fosse Falito e per quel che si lascia intendere non vorrebbe in nessuna maniera haver'occasione di levar' gli suoi Agenti di ferrara, per la servitù che tiene con Lei et tutta casa sua per gli molti favori ricevuti et anco per il guadagno che lui confessa che ne fa. Vostra Eccellenza mi perdoni s'io le scrivo queste minucie, per che a me pare di essere obbligato a darle aviso sempre di tutto quello che saperò, et con questo fine a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimamente Bascio le mani pregandola a tenermi per quel devotissimo servitore che le sono, et sono obbligato di essere.

Di Firenze a xvii Febraro 1575.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 19 February 1575: Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Ho ricevuto due di Vostra Eccellenza in un medesimo tempo et ho visto quanto la mi commanda et le dico che a ponto io havevo gia fatto quel medesimo officio che hora mi vien commandato da Lei circa i titoli del Duca di Mantova et sapra che la signora Duchessa [Giovanna] me ne parlò un giorno mentre stavamo a vedere giocare al calcio et mi disse che il signor Duca di Mantova haveva solo havuto il titolo di Duca di Monferrato et non d'altra cosa. Mi disse ancora queste parole precise parlando de titoli de serenissimi et d'Altezze in proposito di detto Duca che bisognava havere queste Altezze da natura et nascere serenissimi et a questo si havrebbe havuto risposta pronta chi gliel'havesse voluta dare. Il Nuntio si è di già partito molti giorni sono come scrissi a Vostra Eccellenza però non accaderà che io mi finga amalato. Hora che questo non vi è, io vado al pari col Duca [Francesco] et l'Ambasciatore di Luca resta con Don Pietro di dietro et mi sono informato che quando non vi è se non Don Pietro et il detto Ambasciatore, che Don Pietro va al pari del Duca et l'Ambasciatore vi sta di dietro et per dire la verità a Vostra Eccellenza ame pare che questi signori vi honorano molto et Vostra Eccellenza resti pur' con l'animo quieto che dove anderà il suo servitio et la sua dignità io metterò ogni altra cosa da banda et non guarderò in faccia a nessuno per che all'ultimo io non debbo et non voglio havere altro fine che il servirla. Circa poi a quei gioti io non gli ho mai fatto buona ciera, ne mi verranno in casa ne mi parlarano ne loro ne altri banditi dal stato suo e il secretario Pigna ne potrà far fede a Vostra Eccellenza, havendoli io dato conto di un certo Bastianino da Ferrara qual m'erra stato raccomandato da Roma ch'io lo alloggiasse in casa per sei o otto giorni et io quando intesi che erra bandito non lo volsi accettare et le fecci dire che pigliasse altro Camino et le prometo che questi doi furfanti sono venuti in tanto odio qui che sono in disgratia a ogn'uno et insino a Lorenzo Guicciardini il quale lui solo è stato et non altri che gli ha favoriti, a tal che credo che siano per durare qui pocco e questo le dico essendo meglio informato di prima. Qui si dice che il signor Duca si troverà questa Pasqua a Pisa per far' il Capitolo generale de Cavalieri di san steffano; Vostra Eccellenza comandi quel che havrà far' nel resto, per che in tutte le cose non preterirò mai a suoi comandamenti, et con questo fine a Vostra Eccellenza humilissimamente Bascio le mani. A ponto orra finito il folio et fatto fine, quando il signor Duca mi ha mandato a mostrare una littera dell'Ambasciatore Cannigiani, nella quale le scrive che se fosse pervenuto all'orecchie di Sua Eccellenza che Vostra Eccellenza si fosse ammazzato giù d'un Cavalo, che Dio

ci liberi di tal fortuna, che non lo creda et racconta il caso che è intravenuto al Cavaliero tassoni, dicendo che ogn'uno pensava che fosse intravenuto a Lei et che del resto le cose sono passate bene, se non che Vostra Eccellenza ha perduto una gioia di molto valore et cosi Sua Eccellenza ha mandato a ralegrarsi con me mostrando molta consolatione.

Di Firenze a xviii Febraro 1575.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 26 February 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Io ho ricevuto una di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima data in Reggio a xvii Dicembre nella quale mi comanda ch'io facci liberare Giovan Battista Cremasco di Galera, mandatoli per Imputatione d'heresia, et io ho subito fatto commettere la liberatione conforme alla volonta di Vostra Eccellenza. Qui si aspeta per quel che si dice un Cavaliere mandato dal Re di spagna e non si sa a chi e pare che, per quel che mi vien deto, che questo signore non stia molto per di buona voglia. Mondragone si partì hierlaltro per Pisa molto malsatisfatto et prima che partisse visitò la signora Marchesa di Citona [Eleonora Cibo] et le raccontò la causa per la quale lui era venuto in disgratia del Duca [Francesco] la quale scriverò a Vostra Eccellenza s'io saprò di non venirle a fastidio peressere un poco lunga Historia, et detto Mondragone desiderava prima che partisse di visitarmi et di parlarmi ma io non lo seppi fin che non fu partito perche s'io l'havessi sappiuto havrei ritrovato l'hora et il comodo per servitio di Vostra Eccellenza et lui non s'arrischiò per non dare sospetto di se. Vostra Eccellenza sappia che è amata qui da molti et in particolare da quei che sono malsatisfatti et se Vostra Eccellenza sentisse la Marchesa di Cetona, la quale è una di quelle che sono mal satisfatti, conosceria come le cose passano qui et del tutto n'è causa la signora Bianca Capelli, la quale guida le cose come le piace. Il secretario Concino è ammalato e non si muove di letto senon quando si fa levare per qualche negotio perche par qui che non si sia da tanto che non si possi far cosa senon per mezo suo, cosa che da causa di burlarsi del mondo. Il signor Duca mi disse l'altra mattina andando a messa che haveva aviso che il signor Don Gioani d'Austria erra per passare in Italia con molta freta e non sapeva la causa per che, e se ben credo che Vostra Eccellenza l'habbi sapiuto per altra strada pur' non ho voluto mancare di farlene motto. Ho fatto l'offitio che mi ha commandato il signor secretario Pigna in nome suo con la Marchesa di Citona la quale Bascia le mani di Vostra Eccellenza e se le offerisce di nuovo per devotissima serva. Havrei anco fatto l'offitio impostomi per sua parte co'l secretario Concino, se non fosse stato impedito dal suo male per che lui non si lascia troppo visitare, essendo molto travagliato; Messer Bacchio Tholomei mi prega continuamente ch'io lo racordi a Vostra Eccellenza per humilissimo et devotissimo servitore e certo se da l'esteriore si può conoscere l'interiore, io credo che le sia di cuore, poi che ne fa così manifesta proffessione in tutti i luochi. Ne mi occorendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Eccellenza humilissimamente

bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi servitori dessideriamo.

Di Firenze a xxvi febraro M.D.L.xxv.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 27 March 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Io stò aspetando la risposta di Vostra Eccellenza nella quale mi commandi quel ch'io habbi a fare intorno alla littera che fu aperta, e se vorrà ch'io me ne rissentì o pur' ch'io dissimuli. Qui si dice che questo signore [Francesco] non è molto dacordo con il Governatore di Milano e la causa è che gli huomini del Marchese Hercole Malaspini a giorni passati, in Lodesana, erano venuti, sdegnati co'l suo signore, a darsi volontari al Duca di Firenze et il Duca gli accettò, con tutto che il Marchese lo mandasse a pregare a non accetarli et anco il Prencipe di Massa suo Parente l'havesse ancor'lui mandato a pregare, onde detto signore vedendo non potersi riparare, ricorse al Governatore di Milano, dandosi più tosto al Re di Spagna che a nissun'altro signore, di maniera che quando il Podestà di Fivizzano[?] andò là con gli huomini a il quale havea commandato il Duca che andasse a pigliar' il Possesso, trovò che gli errano già arivato gli spagnuoli e haveano già posto fuori l'Armi del Re a tutti tre gli Casteli del detto Marchese, onde detto Podestà se ne ritornò senz'altro, ma il Duca di poi operò tanto che fecece venir' il Marchese a firenze e promettendoli maggior' ricompensa che non la valuta delli Casteli, si fecece fare una donatione molto autentica per la quale mandò di nuovo suoi huomini per pigliare il Possesso, con il consenso del Marchese, il qual haveva già mandato via quelli del Governatore di Milano. Onde gli huomini di doi Casteli subito gli ricevetero, ma quelli de l'altro non volsero riceverli, dicendo che erra del Re di spagna et la cosa è restata così, con malla satisfatione e del Governatore di Milano et anco del Prencipe di Massa, e questo tutto mi ha deto il sechretario di detto Prencipe; mi ha ancor' deto che il suo Padrone si è mandato a offerire all'Ambasciatore del Re in Genoa d'andarli se bisognerà con tre milla fanti per servir' sua Maestà Catolica ne i rumori che si fanno hora in quella città, gli quali ogn'hor'vanno più crescendo come havrà inteso Vostra Eccellenza, et si dubita che questo Duca habbi ancor' lui un pocco di parte nella rivolutione di detta Città, mirando forse ancor'lui, o per dir meglio gli suoi ministri, a quello che mirava il Duca Cosimo suo Padre. Qui passò quatro o cinque giorni sono Monsignor Cannobbio il quale andava precorsore di Sua Santità a Genova innanzi al Cardinale Morone che va legato e dismontò a Pallazzo e negociò con Sua Eccellenza con istivali e speroni in piedi un gran pezzo e io mi ritrovai a ponto in quell'ora in Pallazzo e come hebbe negociato s'Incaminò subito per Genova, e si crede che il Cardinale Morone habbi a favorire in tutte le cose questo Duca per essere tanto seco amico e confidente com'è. Tornò poi, tre giorni sono o quatro, Luiggi dovava il quale

erra stato mandato da Sua Eccellenza a Roma pur per quel che si crede per le cose di Genova, ma non si può intendere quel c'habbi portato. Il secretario Concino persuade il Duca a impatronirsi de quei Casteli, con dire che non è mente di Sua Maestà che gli siano impediti, ma che è per malivolentia del Governatore di Milano che porta a Sua Eccellenza e questo lui ha deto al Secretario del Principe di Massa. Ieri che fu Veneri che fu il giorno della Nunciata, fu anco il di della Natività di questo signore et si erra fatto l'apparato in Domo per andar' alla Messa in Cerimonia, ma dipoi si pentì et andò alla Nunciata molto tardi et disse a me che lo havea fatto per che si sentiva un pocco di doglia sotto una Costa et che havea paura di quella chiesa per esser troppo fredda et humida, ma io mi accorsi poi che la causa era stato la signora Bianca Capeli, la quale per mio credere le havea mandato a comandare che andasse costì dove si trovò d'Incontro a Sua Eccellenza et vidi che ancor lei haveva il Cossino come Principessa et anco sua figliuola, cosa che dà da ridere a molti e prometo a Vostra Eccellenza che fanno le maggior' cose da fanciuli in chiesa che si possi immaginare, guardandosi sempre l'un l'altro, come se fossero innamorati che non si godessero, e la signora Duchessa ne stà molto di mala voglia, la quale non è molto honorata da questo signore et io vidi l'altra matina che l'Incontrassimo che lui a pena si misse la mane a il Capelo con molto dispregio, cosa che mi fece molto maravigliare, essendo avezzo a veder quanto Vostra Eccellenza honorava la sua. Non voglio poi restare di dirle come un Graffagnino suddito di Vostra Eccellenza mi è stato a trovare et mi ha pregato ch'io voglia far' officio per un suo figliuolo, il quale fu già otto mesi sono ritenuto a Pisa per causa molto debole, com'ella vedrà dalla supplica Inclusa, però io non ho voluto fare officio nissuno senza sua licenza e se la mi comandarà ch'io facci sempre officio per suoi sudditi, lo farò, ma d'altra maniera non mi pigliarò questa presuntione. Il Nuncio è gionto questa sera et io l'ho visitato et mi ha deto che le cose di Genova vanno peggio che mai et mi ha detto che il Cardinale Morone sarrà qui fra tre o quattro giorni, però havrei havuto caro sapere come mi havrò a governare per che si anderà a Messa o altri officj in Cerimonia, però se non lo saprò a tempo farò di modo nondimeno o ch'io havrò il mio luoco o ch'io non v'andarò; Vostra Eccellenza però mi facci avisare subito quello c'havrò a fare. Non voglio anco restare di dirle di nuovo ch'ella non creda ch'io fossi stato così pocco accorto e così Imprudente ch'io havessi posto le sue lettere alligate con quelle del Cannigiani e so ch'ella considererà che non ha dal verisimile che non l'havendo fatto per il Passato, io l'havessi all'hora cominciato a fare senza proposito, e prometo a Vostra Eccellenza che questa cosa mi ha dato molto fastidio per il timore che

ho sempre di non disservirla e di non far' qualche operatione che le dispiaccia. La supplico bene a farmi favore di comandare che mi sia dato aviso sempre delle recvute delle mie, perche non vorrei che guardandossi da qui innanzi di risserarle, le ritenessero e non le lasciassero capitare. Ne mi occorendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandola a comandare ch'io sia avisato di tutto quello che sarrà seco servitio, acciò io non facci qualche errore per inadvertenza.

Di Firenze a 27 de Marzo 1575.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Humilissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 29 May 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso:

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Per non haver' per hora cosa nuova da scrivere a Vostra Altezza, le farò solamente humilissima riverenza con questa mia, facendole sapere che qui si attende a darsi buon tempo et in particolare attendendosi alle cose dell'Amore, il quale il giorno delle feste travaglia molto noi altri per esser' sempre in questi di longhi sonata ogni volta l'Ave maria prima che montiamo a cavallo per andar' a messa, per che questo signore non si vuol mai partire da Pallazzo sin tanto che non ha aviso che sia levata et vestita la signora Bianca et dove ella ha andar' a messa; doppo havuto la messa, caminiamo anco un' hora per nostro piacere per incontrarla tre e quatro volte, cosa che dà di ridere non solamente alli Ambasciatori ma anco a'l popolo, in veder' questo Prencipe che fa tanto del grande e del savio, far cose più tosto da fanciulo che da huomo, e la cosa è venuta hormai a tanta domestichezza che detta signora Bianca se ne và a Pallazzo accompagnato da molti Gentil'huomini a visitar' la serenissima signora Duchessa [Giovanna], la quale se la tiene appresso assentata suso una seggia, facendole molto honore, con che animo lo faccia, Vostra Altezza se lo puo immaginare. Gli ministri principali la vanno a corteggiare continuamente et inparticolare il secretario Concino, il quale come huomo nato di basso lignagio e per conseguente di basso animo, stimando più l'Interesso proprio che la reputatione del suo signore, come servitore maligno lauda questa sua vita e lo persuade a' questi piaceri, per poter governare lui a suo modo, come ben le vien fatto; ma ho sentito de ministri amorevoli gli quali han per oggetto principale la reputatione e la grandezza del suo signore dolersi assai di questo et in particolare il secretario Roseli, il qual' è gentil'huomo molto prudente e degno di servir ogni gran Re per quel che dicono quelli che lo conoscano intrinsecamente, ma il Concino lo tien basso quanto può, acciò non sia conosciuto il suo valore, per che il paragone non l'offenda. Si dice che detto Concino potrebbe essere la ruina di questo signore in questa sua ultima età, per esser' tanto francese com'è, e procurasi sempre d'inimicare Sua Eccellenza alli spagnuoli, e questo è per che n'ha ricevuto, dicono, qualche presente da Francesi e molte offerte dalla Regina Madre, et un giorno il signor Mondragone, essendo a spasso fuor' della terra con Sua Eccellenza, lo avvertì di questo e detto signore mutò ragionamento dicendo: vedete che bei luochi sono questi, e lui le rispose: e però la se gli sappi conservare e governi qualche volta col suo giudicio e non con quello delli altri, e detto signore si amutì e non rispose più per che difficilmente si può contradire la verità. Qui s'incomincia havere delle persecutioni di faraone, essendo tanta coppia di

locuste o di Grili come si dice qui, che mangiano su quel di Siena, dalla qual firenze ha il vivere del Grano, ogni cosa et ? tanta coppia che io ho sentito dire al signor Duca a punto parlando co'l Nuncio che ogni giorno se n'amazza tre milla staia, e che vi si è accolto cinquecento moggia di ove, la qual cosa odendola mi parve impossibile et l'addimandai a molti, che mi affermano tutti essere cosi; e qui si dice che questi sono segni che manda il signor Iddio innanzi, quando vuol incominciare a dare il Castigo de peccati. Di qui si è fugito il Cavaliero Pier' Ridolfi, Cavaliero dell'ordine di San Michele, et insieme un Luigi Caponi, nobilissimi di questa Città e di grandissimo Parentado, e si dice che la causa è stata per esser' sta' posto prigioniero il figliolo che fu di Pandolfo Pucci, per causa d'un veneno c'havevano fatto far' a Venetia il quale dicono ch'erra tanto speditivo che dua goccioli amazzava in tre hore, et il Cavaliero Pier ridolfi lo portò da Venetia e una spia di quelle che tiene questo signore costà lo avisò subito, onde Sua Eccellenza dubitò quasi che fosse fatto per lui, ma pur si è chiarito che erra fatto per tossicare un Ruberto de Ricci molto favorito di Sua Eccellenza, e si dice che lo voleano fare per non pottersi vendicare di altra maniera de certe ingiurie ricevute da lui, per essere huomo che ha licenza e di poter' portar' Armi e di poter' menar' con lui huomini armati, cose che sono difficili da potersi ottenere qui dalli altri. Le cose di Genova per quel che si dice qui, passano della medesima maniera male: li sono andati a stare tanti nobili nel stato del Principe di Massa o a Massa o a Carrara, che son tanto piene che ha bisognato il detto signore darli il suo Palazzo medesimo e hora lui se ne sta su quel di Pisa, a quei suoi luochi, et fa molta professione di esser' molto servitore di Vostra Altezza et ogni volta che scrive al suo secretario che tiene qui, gli ordina continuamente che mi visiti sempre in suo nome. La Serenissima signora Duchessa sta ogni di meglio del suo parto et si è ingrassata nel letto, e a' punto Domenica quando la visitai, mi comandò ch'io Basciasse le mani di Vostra Altezza in nome suo, e ch'io le faccessi fede che l'ama da dovere e che dessidera occasione di farle servitio. Il signor Lelio torelli, qual fa molta professione di esserle servitore, e credo che quel buon vecchio sia da doverlo et lo mostra nominando sempre Vostra Altezza e in pubblico e in privato con gli suoi titoli, mi pregò l'altro giorno ch'io lo visitai ch'io li Basciasse le mani in suo nome e che le facesse fede che se bene gli mancano le forze per haver' già finiti gli ottantasei anni, che non gli manca pero il dessiderio di servirla, e prometo a Vostra Altezza che è quasi miracolo a veder' un huomo de tant'anni havere cosi sano inteletto e cosi salda memoria et è ancor' lui uno di quelli che biasima molto il secretario Concino, dicendo che è uno delli Interessati huomini che habbi mai conosciuto e certo

che non dice buggia, et a me bastaria l'animo s'io l'appresentassi di ottenere tutto quello ch'io volessi in questa corte, ma non bisogna pensare guadagnarselo afato di altra maniera. La signora marchesa di Citona moglie del signor Chiapino, mi ha pregato ch'io bascia di nuovo le mani di Vostra Altezza in nome suo e che gliela racordi per humilissima e devotissima serva, e le prometo con che questa signora ne fa proffessione e in publico e in privato. Vostra Altezza mi perdoni s'io sarò qualche volta nel mio scrivere un pocco troppo thedioso per che mi par' mio offitio di scrivere ogni minucia a Vostra Altezza alla quale pregando da Nostro signore Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi servitori dessideriamo humilissimamente bascio le mani et in sua buona gratia mi raccomando.

Di Firenze a xxviii Maggio 1575.

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Fascicolo 12 dated 1575:

Letter dated 2 July 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Ho fatto l'offitio che mi ha commandato vostra Altezza co'l Conte Francesco di Novelara, il qual ha mostrato di accettarlo per [?] favore et ha pregato me che le facci fede di nuovo che gli è servitore da doverlo. Il signor Duca [Francesco] attende hora a darsi piaceri continuamente o alla caccia o a notare, ha havuto però travaglio per il male della Bianca Capelli, il quale è stato assai pericoloso et si diceva qui che se moreva portava pericolo che detto signore non volesse anche lui più vivere; stava Sua Eccellenza ogni giorno con lei tre o quattr'hore et si dice che non ha mutato l'alloggiamento di Palazzo in Piti tanto per il caldo quanto per esserli più vicino. Le cose sono a tal termine in questo paese che chi vuole espeditione per grazia o per giustitia bisogna andar per mezzo di detta Bianca, overo appresentare il Concino et non poco perche non è uccello di picciol pasto, et che sia il vero il Prencipe di Massa ne può rendere buon testimonio essendo stato intorno a un negotio molti mesi et non ha mai potuto concludere niente sin tanto che non ha donato a costui 500 Δ, ma donatogli che li ha, non solamente ha ottenuto quello che addimandava ma di più assai, et prima solea dire che il suo secretario era huomo che non sapeva negoziare et che era importuno, hora dice che è il più gentile et il più garbato huomo che si possa trovare, si che chi vuole facilitare le cose qui, chi vi ha negotio bisogna o andare per mezo di questa Donna o donare a quest'altro. Havrei caro che Vostra Altezza comandasse che mi fusse fatto sapere quel che ha sentito di quella mia attione del giorno di san Giovanni e come vien raccontata dal Canigiani il qual credo che ne sara stato avisato da suoi amici perche io sto sempre in dubbio di non [?] nel suo servitio et vi è stato qualche huomo qui che ha detto ch'io mostrai in quel atto di esser'ardente e che per che mi vi trovava non mi doveva muovere, et io ho risposto a chi ne n'ha parlato che se volevano ch'io restassi, non mi doveano mettere il luocotenente a man destra e veramente che non fu colpa di altro che di lui stesso che vi andò e di colui che havea apparato, non essendo cosi solito di far' gli altri anni et il Guardaroba ne ha havuto un gran ribufo da Sua Eccellenza et è quasi stato per esser' espedito da questo servitio, e credo che da qui innanzi si avrà più consideratione alle cose e qualchi disordini che sono causati per l'innanzi sono causati dalli ministri quali sono poco pratici in queste cose, e s'io ne lasciasse passare doi o tre fariano l'habbito a trattarmi come volessero loro. Creda pur Vostra Altezza che non mancarò di usar' tutta quella modestia nelle mie attioni che potrò, sapendo esser' cosi

sua volontà, ma dove andrà il suo servitio io non guardarò in fronte a nissuno perche a me basta haver' la gratia sua e vadino tutte le altre cose come si vogliano. Ho dato una lista al Conte ottavio Landi deli 10[or 16?] paramenti che dessideraria la Contessa di Pietra vendere a Vostra Altezza gli quali ho visto io e me sono parsi molto belli, come sono parsi anche a tutti gli altri che gli han visti, quali dicono che è cosa veramente da Preincipe però la supplico a farmi gratia di comandare ch'io sia avisato di quel che vorrà fare, acciò possi rispondere a detta signora la quale me ha pregato ch'io Basci humilissimamente le mani a Vostra Altezza in nome suo e che gliela racordi per tanto affetionata serva quanto erra anche il Conte Clemente suo marito. In Corte si è maritata una Dama e vi sono fatte le Nozze dove anch'io fui invitato dalla Signora Duchessa [Giovanna] et son stato molto accarezzato et molto honorato e doppo magnare detta signora hebbe ragionamento con me di Vostra Altezza dicendomi che sapeva che erra molto affezionato alla natione Allemana, e che per ciò tutti erano obligati ad amarla e dessiderar occasione di farle servitio, e le prometo che quando parla di lei ne parla con tanta amorevolezza che non si potria dir più. Il signore di Piombino mi pregò quando si partì l'altro giorno di qui che Basciassi le mani di Vostra Altezza in nome suo, e certo che questo signore mostra di esserlo molto servitore et ha usato molte cortesie a me per esser' servitore suo, e mostra di non essere molto satisfatto di qui perche vi si attende assai a dar disgusto a i nobili et poca satisfattione et per questo lui se ne sta continuamente ritirato alli suoi luoghi. Il fratello della signora Donna Leonora moglie del signor Don Pietro è passato con due Galere vicino a Livorno et è stato mandato a visitare et invitare dalla sorella et non solo non ha voluto accettare lo invito, ma ne anche ha pur voluto toccar Livorno et non si sa la causa, et è andato di longo a Napoli a trovar Don Giovanni. Si manda hora Ambasciatore in Spagna et vi mandano l'orandino, quello che è adesso luogotenente del Consiglio, si crede però che non habbia a riuscire in nessuna maniera, si per esser huomo che non è mai stato cortigiano et avezzo a far conti di mercantie, si anche per esser huomo molto stretto et avarissimo a tal che non sarà pericolo che faccia di quello del Cavaliere de Nobili et prometto a Vostra Altezza che ha ciera d'ogni cosa che d'Ambasciare. Ne mi occorendo per hora dire altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi servitori dessideriamo.

Di Firenze gli 2 di luglio 1575.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 31 ottobre 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Par' che le cose di Genova si siano intorbidate e che si habbia hora l'accordo per molto difficile. Si marita la figliola del signor Duca Cosimo et della signora Camilla al figliolo del Conte santafiore et già è concluso il matrimonio et havrà per più di cento mila scudi: prima havrà 25/m che fece mettere suo padre in banco quando nacque con li guadagni che havranno fatti sin hora; havrà li 400 che pagano ogni mese alla signora Camilla, havendo suo padre lasciato che passino nella figliola et anche ne gli heredi della figliola li quali gli sono pagati qui ogni mese senza replica nessuna; ha pur anche della signora Camilla tremila scudi d'entrata di certe moline che gli lasciò detto signor che sono di molto valore, siche si fa conto che passerà i cento mila di assai. Si tratta ancor di maritare il Marchese di Massa in una figliola del detto Conte santa Fiore con dote di sessanta mila scudi, et la marchesa di Citona [Eleonora Cibo] me l'ha detto hoggi confidentemente e mi ha pregato ch'io non ne facci motto con nessuno. Ho visitato la signora Donna Isabella, la quale sta assai meglio e si comincerà, per quel che ha detto a me, a levarsi del letto; mi ha visto molto volentieri e mi ha fatto di molte carezze e mi trattene forse tre hore parlandomi assai di Vostra Altezza e mi commanda ch'io le Basciassi le mani in nome suo, e che gliela racordassi per quell'amorevole Parente e serva che sempre l'erra stata. Non mancherò di far l'offitio con quel Portoghese [?] occasione quando tornai da Ferrara trovai che quel furfante di Modesto s'era annidato in casa del Conte Francesco di Nuvolara ma detto Conte già sel'ha caviato di casa et gli ha fatto dire che non vi torni più; non mancherò di fare offitio come da me che siano cacciati da questo stato et già il Guiccardino ne ha parlato a me più di due volte per che lui vorrebbe, sicome egli è stato causa che vennero qui, vorrebbe anche essere che fossero cacciati per mostrare a Vostra Altezza che li è servitore per quel che lui mi dice. Si dice che il signor Duca [Francesco] non tornerà dal Poggio fino fatto Natale hora che si è acconcio il tempo, venendo quell'aere alla signora Bianca et ancorche gli altri vi stiano male basta che lei sola vi stia bene et veramente alla casa sua vi è miglior aere per essere su un Poggio alto là dove va detto signor quasi ogni notte a dormire con scusa di andare a frugnuolo et altri caccie d'ucelli con molto fastidio della signora Duchessa [Giovanna], et prometto a Vostra Altezza che quando Sua Altezza et la detta Bianca vanno fuori in campagna lei par la Duchessa, perche va suso una carrozza di Sua Eccellenza con quattro cavalli accompagnata da molti gentil'huomini, et la Duchessa va sola accompagnata dal Conte Polidoro da Castello et questa è cosa che ogn'huomo vede

ogni giorno et credo che Sua Maestà Cesarea [Maximilian II] lo sapesse che l'havrebbe molto a male, sapendo che una puttana sia anteposta in tutte le cose a sua sorella, ma credo che non lo sappia et per questo bisognaria che gli Principi Grandi havessero delle spie in tutti i luoghi acciò sapessero da chi fossero amati et rispettati, et da chi nò. Il signor Don Pietro sta ancor nel letto, ma quel che è peggio è che si pensava che il suo male fossero morene[?] et si sono scoperte croste per essergli un poco troppo piaciuto le pesche et si ragiona di tagliarli et dargli il fuoco sì che a me pare che questi signori tutti stiano o sul fare o sul farsi fare. Non voglio anche restare di dire a Vostra Altezza come qui si dice che è venuto a ferrara uno Ambasciatore Polaco et io n'ho viste lettere di mercanti nelle quali è venuto a dar nova come Vostra Altezza è eletta Re di Polonia, piaccia al signor Dio che cosi sia et per grandezza et essaltatione sua, sì anche per bene et consolatione de' suoi servitori nel numero de quali mi trovo hora pur anch'io per gratia sua. Supplico poi Vostra Altezza ad havermi per iscusato se non havrà mia lettere cosi presto come soleva per che ne è causa questo rumor' di Peste. Io non mancarò però di scrivere continuamente et mi assicurarò di mandarle alla ventura, e questo l'ho voluto dire per che non vorrei che mi havesse Negligente nel suo servitio, cosi sapess'io molto come havrò sempre grandissima volontà di servirla, et con tal fine a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandola a conservarmi in sua buona gratia da me sopra ogn'altra cosa desiderato.

Di Fiorenza gli xxxi d'Ottobre M.D.L.xxv.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 7 December 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Non credi Vostra Altezza che io sia così negligente nel suo servizio ne così pocc'obbediente a suoi commandamenti, che se Io havessi ricevuto La lettera nella quale Vostra Altezza mi comandava ch'io osservassi i corrieri che si espediscono qui da Sua Eccellenza et cercassi d'intendere i luoghi ove erano mandati che non l'havessi fatto con ogni diligenza, come farò per l'avenire, non havendo altro fine che il servizio di Vostra Altezza nel quale quando havro speso e l'havere e la vita, mi parrà haver' satisfato molto pocco rispetto a quel che debbo. Del Governatore d'Orbetello s'intende che venne qui mandato dal signor Don Giovanni per le cose de confini et dicono che parlò a Sua Eccellenza [Francesco] molto alteratamente con dirli che comandasse a suoi Ministri che havessero quel rispetto alle cose di Sua Maestà [Philip II] che si conviene et che non si desse causa a suoi Ministri di procedere di altro modo di quello che s'era proceduto sin'hora. Qui si tratta hora di eleggere uno Ambasciatore per Francia in luogo dell'Aleman che se ritorna, han voluto mandare il Cavaliere Gadi ma lui non ha voluto accettare l'impresa, si crede che manderanno un certo Giuliano Gondi, il quale è un huomo grosso di corpo et di cervello per quello che ho potuto conoscere io per quel poco che l'ho praticato et credo che non sappia leggere per quello che mi è stato detto, si che per Ambasciatore di spagna et di Francia questo signore sarà molto bene accommodato, et questo gli aviene al povero signore per essere solamente Tromba et lasciarsi dar il fiato da chi attende più all'interesse proprio che alla reputatione di Sua Eccellenza. Di quelli che si haveano amandare in Francia era anche in predicamento il Cavaliere Salviati ma lui ha detto al signor Concino che non vi vuole andare in nissuna maniera, havendo desiderio di venire a Ferrara per essersi inteso che il signor Canigiani procura la licentia per venire a riposarsi, ma credo che non gli verra fatta essendo che la signora Bianca favorisce uno che si chiama Giovanni Battista Cini, il quale vorrebbe venirci lui ambasciatore et è, per quello che si vede, huomo assai sagace et astuto però poco amato qui per essere tenuto huomo doppio et maligno et che dica poche volte il vero, Ma credo però che costui verra se si havrà a mutare il Canigiano perche importa troppo in questo paese l'essere favorito dalla Bianca, et è ben giusto se ella governa il stato a suo modo che ella mandi anche un'ambasciatore secondo che gli piace, et credo che da qui inanzi si potrà dire ambasciatore più tosto della Bianca che del Duca di Fiorenza. Non mancherò di far quell'ufficio che mi comanda Vostra Altezza con la signora Marchesa [Eleonora Cibo] moglie che fu del signor Chiapino, la qual l'assicuro

io che le è serva da dovero e ne fa professione gagliardissima. Farò anco co'l secretario Concino quel ch'ella mi comanda. Col Conte di Nuvolara procederò di quella maniera che m'immaginerò che sia di satisfatione di Vostra Altezza. Non mancherò di darle conto, come ho fatto sin'hora, di Forestieri che capiteranno qui et della ciera che sarà lor fatta et come saranno trattati. Mando a Vostra Altezza un'altro vaseto di Porcelana qual mi donò il signor Duca l'altro giorno essendo Io con Monsignor Noncio al Casino per andar'incontro con Sua Eccellenza al Cardinale di Gambara. Non lo mandai per il Corrier' passato, Immaginandomi a punto un caso simile com'è intravenuto al primo. Le manderò anche presto delle Gioie che fa questo signore e vedrò anche di havere un pocco di disegno, se potrò, dell'ingegno che fanno questi thedeschi da cuncar'[] le monete e glie lo invierò. Non voglio anche restar di dirle che si crede che il Canigiano havrà gran difficoltà in haver licenza, trovandosi Sua Eccellenza molto ben soddisfatta del suo servitio. Qui si dice da qualchuno che Sua Maestà Cesarea [Maximilian II] ha confermato i titoli di Serenissimo a questo signore et altri dicono che non, ma che glieli confermerà ben presto, cosa che io non credo et dicono che Sua Maestà l'ha fatto perche Vostra Altezza ha cercato et cerca di contrastare con suo figlio nella elettione del Regno di Polonia; mi pare però che l'Imperatore, sia come si voglia, non dovrebbe in modo alcuno cercare di favorire questo signore et tanto più se sapesse come viene trattata la Serenissima sua sorella [Giovanna] come so io, bisognandole a un certo modo il più delle volte esser serva d'una Bianca Capelli, et prometto a Vostra Altezza che se Sua Altezza comandasse una cosa et la Bianca un'altra che sarebbe più tosto servita essa Bianca che Lei, cosa che fa tenere questo Principe per huomo di poco giudicio et molto effeminato, et dico a Vostra Altezza che la cosa è venuta a tale che se ne parla per tutto alla libera et senza rispetto et li potria intravenire a questo signore se lui attende a questa vita che saria molto poco amato et molto poco stimato, non facendo mai grazia a nessuno se non per mezi honesti. Il Marchese di Massa figliuol del Principe si trova qui et è venuto per visitar' la signora Marchesa sua Cia et anco per vedere di condurla a Massa, e mi ha pregato ch'io Bascia le mani in nome suo di Vostra Altezza e che glielo offerisca per quel devotissimo servitore che è suo Padre. Non è stato qui molto accarezzato perche non è loro solito di accarezzare signori che non alloggiano in Palazzo, ma quelli bisogna pure accarezzare quasi come per forza et voglio dire questa parola presuntuosa che credo che sia stato accarezzato più da me che da nessun'altro Fiorentino cercando io di accarezzare sempre per quanto s'estendono le deboli forze mie tutti quelli che conosco esser' veri servitori di Vostra Altezza, come cercarò anche

sempre, ancor' che debole Instrumento et anco non neccessario a Lei, di acquistarle de servitori nuovi continuamente. Supplico a Vostra Altezza di farmi avisar della ricevuta di questa per che Io non la mando per Corriero ordinario, ma per un Christoforo Buosi da Ferrara. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandola dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che Io suo vero e devotissimo servitore le dessidero.

Di Firenze gli vii Decembre M.D.L.xxv.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 19 December 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Questo signore [Francesco] ha havuto il Decreto dall'Imperatore [Maximilian II] di poter usare i suoi titoli del quale per quello che lui dice si contenta molto et aspetta il Privilegio, il qual dice che sarà molto amplo a suo favore. Ha mandato già il Decreto a Sua Santità [Pope Gregory XIII]. Sua Eccellenza ha cacciato via l'altra sera una Thedesca a tre hore di notte di quelle che vennero con Sua Altezza [Giovanna] si che la signora Duchessa è molto di mala voglia et ha detto alla signora Marchesa di Citona [Eleonora Cibo] che fanno queste cose per coprire il dishonore della signora Donna Isabella con dire che quelli che giudicheranno che queste cose siano bugie potranno anco credere che quello che si è detto di detta signora non sia vero. Supplico Vostra Altezza che mi faccia dar aviso della ricevuta di quella che le scrisse hieri l'altro perche io ho havuto un poco di dubbio che vadi sinistra. L'Ambasciatore di Lucca ch'erra qui, il qual si chiama il signor Michel diodati, si è partito senza aspetar' il successore, per non poter' comportar' quest'aere. Si è trovato il testamento del signor Chiapino il quale non si publicava, se non errano[?] gli ufficiali della gabella che l'hanno scoperto per esser'pagati dalla gabella del lassato come si usa qui et si è trovato che detto signor Chiapino lascia alla signora Marchesa sua moglie tutti gli Mobili del Pallazzo, si che questa signora stara molto meglio vedova che non faceva maritata. Il signor Duca l'ha mandata a visitare per il secretario Concino facendoli molti offerte, ma lei però non le crede, essendo chiara prima che mo' di costoro et questo hanno fatto perche vorriano che ella si fermasse in Fiorenza, ma lei per quello che ha detto a me non vi vuol stare, et io non ho mancato però di dirle che se vuol venire a star a Ferrara che Vostra Altezza non mancherà di honorarla et di farle tutte le cortesie del Mondo. Ne mi occorendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato ch'io suo vero e devotissimo servitore le dessidero.

Di Firenze gli xviii Decembre M.D.L.xxv.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 31 December 1575: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Ho ricevuto la di Vostra Altezza dei xxii del presente et non mancarò di continuare in quello ch'ella mi comanda. Ho dato la sua alla signora Leonora Cibo moglie che fu del signor Chiapino, la qual ha mostrato di haver' molta consolacione de i favori che le fa Vostra Altezza et mi ha deto che se le ritrova tant'obligata serva quant'altra che si habbia, e mi ha ancor' deto di volerle rispondere. Non mancarò poi di opperare che detta signora, quando tornerà a parlare a Sua Altezza [Giovanna], le mostri la strada cosi con bel mo[do?] con la quale ha da mandare le lettere et da far sapere le cose sue a Sua Maestà Cesarea [Maximilian II]. Non voglio restar di dirli con questo proposito che essendo io l'altro giorno a cavallo per la terra m'incontrai nella signora Duchessa et cavalcando cosi con lei a spasso incontrassimo la Bianca, la quale subito vedutasi fece voltare il cocchio suo per un'altra strada et voltò le spalle con molto disprezzo et prometto a Vostra Altezza che la povera signora diventò molto rossa et restò molto affrontata. Hanno anco proibito che non vadi da detta signora senò pochi gentilhuomini li quali pochi sono nominati da Sua Eccellenza, fra quali son nominato anch'io per uno dei primi che vi posso andare quando voglio per quello che mi è stato riferito, et detta signora certo mi vede tanto volentieri et mi mostra tanta buona volontà che mi da l'animo che col tempo possi qualche volta confidar qualche cosa sua con me. La cosa del sale de Graffagnini non si espedirà sin tanto che non torna messer Carlo Piti che si trova fuori a certi suoi poderi e sarà qui presto, a il qual sta a espedir' queste cose, et il signor Duca ha comandato a il Gratio[?] che subito che sia tornato lo mandi da me acciò che si espedisca, et io non mancarò di solecitar' con ogni diligenza l'espeditiione e ne darò subito aviso a Vostra Altezza. Quivi si trova il Maggior Domo della Imperatrice, il qual ha negociato sta'mane co'l signor Duca un gran pezzo, et è alloggiato nel Convento di santa Croce, et non ha mai voluto andare da alloggiare in Palazzo, con tutto che l'habbino mandato ad invitare, et dice che vuol star costi per poter meglio negoziare i fatti di sua signora. Questo è un huomo d'età et va vestito a lungo et è spagnuolo, non si sa ancora per che cosa sia qua, ma i frati sono molto miei amici, cercherò da essi d'intendere qualche cosa et nedaro aviso a Vostra Altezza, et prima mi haveano scorto per superbo et hora non mi tengono piu per tale poiche le cose passano in consuetudine. Qui si aspettano hora [1 line illegible] Vostra Altezza ma non si sa però quando giongerano. Il signor Duca ha detto che il Cardinale Morone le ha scritto che le cose di Genova cominciano a pigliar' sesto e che si è accomodato un punto di grande

importanza ma che vene sono ancor' dua anco grandi, ma che spera però che si come si è accomodato quello di maggior'importanza che si accomoderano anco quest'altri. Per lettere di Mondragone scritte alla signora Leonora Cibo s'intende che sono arrivati molti Spagnuoli in Napoli et lui scrive aponto che sono arrivati forse mali per quel ch'uno dice, Dio ci aiuti, et accenna a queste parti di qua et la signora mostrò hieri a me la detta lettera con occasione che detto Mondragone la prega che mi bacia le mani in nome suo, et che desidera servirmi per dir come dice lui et che desideraria scrivermi ma teme che le lettere non vadano in sinistro. Qui si fece sabbato sera allegrezza per l'ellectione del Re di Pollonia con fuochi per le strade e rumori di fuochi artificiosi al Pallazzo, et con tal fine a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente bascio le mani pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità che io suo devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore le dessidero. Di Firenze a xxxi Dicembre 1575.

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,
Hercole Cortile.

Pos.ta [postscripta?]:

Qui si dice che Vostra Altezza piglia l'ordine del Tosone. Si è ancor detto che ha havuto nella elettione del Re di Polonia sette voti per Lei. Si va pur continuando di dire anco che Vostra Altezza si mariterà nella figlia dell'Imperatore overo nella figlia del Duca di Baviera. Si dice anche chel Decreto dell'Imperatore non satisfà a fatto questo signore perche lo chiamano in esso Gran Duca in Toscana et lui vorrebbe esser chiamato Gran Duca di Toscana, però hanno speranza ch'egli habbi a ottenere ciò che vorrà appresentando a quei signori come fa. Gli ministri di questi signori hanno incominciato andare almeno due volte la settimana a Casa della Bianca et si dice per consiliar forse le cose del Stato, cosa che da molto da ridere a tutti et che fa tenere in molto poco prezzo questo signore come huomo che si lascia governare dall'appetito et non dalla ragione, et la povera signora Duchessa ne sente molta afflittione. Hor pensa Vostra Altezza se Sua Maestà havesse chi le dicesse queste cose se lo chiamaria Gran Duca ne in Toscana ne di Toscana, essendoche vilipende una sua sorella di questa maniera. Sua Eccellenza mi mostra certo buona volontà per quello che si può vedere esteriormente, ne voglio restar di dirle che il giorno di Natale andassimo alla Messa in ponteficale, et dove prima faceano porme l'apparato di veluto negro hora lofanno di veluto cremesino, frangiato d'oro con due cussini del medesimo medesimamente frangiati et di dietro l'appartamento di tela d'argento, come havea anche il signor Duca, tutto su un medesimo Palco e Sua Eccellenza fece favore di ragionare con me quasi tutta quella mattina con

tutto che vi fosse Monsignor Nontio in mezo, havendomi Sua Eccellenza scorto anche ver musico, a talche mi convien star su la mia per non mi far conoscere per ignorante, et prima che andassimo al Domo pigliassimo due messe basse in Camera, dove erano in terra tre cassoni tutti tre alpari: uno per il signor Duca, uno per il Nontio, et l'altro per me, ne Cameriere ne nissun'altro entrò in camera eccetto che l'Arcivescovo di Pisa qual tornò da Roma quattro o sei giorni sono, et mentre che udimo queste altri due messe Sua Eccellenza ragionò anche sempre con me delle cose di Spagna, et ancorche queste cose non siano degne di Lei, le scrivo nondimeno, accioche sappia ogni minutia et che sappia come son trattato perche al tempo del Conegrano, non sia detto per biasmar nissuno, lui stava con li Consiglieri apena con un razzo[?] sotto, come si può informar Vostra Altezza ma qui non bisogna essere Melle chi non vuole esser mangiato come si suol dire dalle Mosche.

Fascicolo 13 dated 1576:

Letter dated 28 January 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Ho visto quanto Vostra Altezza mi ha fatto comandare per il Tassone et di già ho parlato col Cavaliere Salviati et gli ho detto che secondo la mia opinione Vostra Altezza non è per accettare in nessuna maniera la dedicatione del libro senza i suoi titoli. Mi ha risposto che in tutti i modi lui ha opinione di volerla dedicare a lei; Io gli ho soggiunto che non saria se non bene ch'egli intendesse la intentione del signor Duca et lui mi ha risposto che ne parlerà se vorrò io, ma che crede che la risposta sara che no, dice però che si può vedere nelle lettere scritte a Imperatori et a Re et ad altri Principi che non vengono trattati se non di Magnanimo glorioso et invito et poi nella lettera vengono trattati di voi semplicemente, però che non vuol fare se non quello che vorrò io. Si dice che il signor Don Giovanni sarà tosto a Livorno, ma non si sa però certo che voglia toccare questo del signor Duca [Francesco], et hoggi facilmente partirà il signor Mario santa Fiore per andare a far mettere in ordine et invitarlo et se vorrà toccare questo di questo signore si crede che Sua Eccellenza andera a Livorno. Il signor Don Pietro è tornato da Pisa dove è stato molti giorni per sanarsi del mal francese et sta men male di quello che stava prima. Il signor Duca ha detto di voler andara Pisa questa Quadragesima et anche a Livorno ma non si sa però il certo; questo viaggio lo vuol fare per vedere x Galere che fa armare che vuole per che eschino a buon tempo et anche per volere far aggrandire Livorno. Il signor Mario Santa Fiore è stato fatto in luogo del signor Chiappino generale della fanteria; si crede da molti che per questa ca[usa?] il signor Prospero Colonna non tornerà et se torna che non vistarà perche non ha ancor mandato nessuno a rallegrarsi con lo Imperatore della elettione di Polonia et si crede che tardera sino alla venuta di questo gentiluomo che è tanto tempo che si aspetta. Hiersera il Secretario Serguidi andò a ritrovare il Cavaliere Salviati et gli domando se voleva andare a servire il signor Duca per Ambasciatore in Francia; lui gli rispose di no perche non voleva che gli intravenisse come intravenne al Cavaliere di Nobili di morire nelle Stinche. Gli fu risposto che non vi era pericolo di questo, essendo che lui non spenderia in giuoco ne in putane ne in altri vigliacheria come havea fatto lui et soggiunse che se il Cavaliere di Nobili si confidava nella clementia del suo signore non sarebbe ne anche entrato nelle stinche, ma che in vece di lodarsene se ne lamentava infinitamente et che per questo il suo signore si sdegnò. Gli disse anche che in quel tempo non havea ne la provisione che hanno hora di otto scudi il giorno et che oltre la provisione se vi voleva

andare che gli dariano anche danari da mettere in ordine et che gli dariano anche alle volte qualche aiuto di costa. Lui però sin'hora non ha voluto accettare niente et si è lasciato intendere che havendo a servire questo signore per Ambasciatore che venirebbe piu presto a Ferrara per più sua comodità. Gli è stato risposto che l'Ambascieria è mezo come promessa a un suo amico grande, ma non gli ha voluto dire a chi; io mi credo che sia quel Giovan Battista Cini del quale ho scritto altre volte a Vostra Altezza il quale è tenuto huomo più tosto vicioso et di malissima lingua et per quello che si ragiona dice rade volte il vero, ma ha quello che importa più in queste parti per lui che è il favore della Bianca. Il Fiscali mi ha detto a punto stamane che crede che si moveranno il Canigiani poi che lui ne fa tanta istanza, dicendo che non può resistere a cotesta spesa, et pur ha tre scudi il giorno et Vostra Altezza sa pure come non spende molto; gli haveano pero accresciuto anche qualche cosa per quel che mi ha detto il Fiscali, ma lui ha replicato che vuol venire a lasciar le sue ossa a Fiorenza parendogli forse che se lasciasse l'ossa in qualche altro luogo che l'anima andasse a male. La signora Marchesa di Cetona [Eleonora Cibo] vuol uscir presto dalle Murate per andare a star qualche giorno a Massa, et anche dice che vuol venir a Ferrara a far riverenza a Vostra Altezza et farseli conoscere pntialm.te[presentialmente?] per quella devotissima et obligatissima serva che le è. Io non manco ogni giorno di persuaderla a venir a star a Ferrara, non volendo in modo alcuno stare a Fiorenza, promettendoli certo che sara honorata et accarezzata secondo i suoi meriti et secondo l'affettione che lei porta a Vostra Altezza. La signora Duchessa [Giovanna] sta molto di malavoglia et ha lasciato stare quello intratenimento che si pigliava alle comedie et scrisse l'altro giorno una police[?] alla s.ra Marchesa che facesse pregare alle Murate al signor Iddio che la liberasse dai suoi travagli et disse di volerla andare a visitare. La detta signora Marchesa mi ha promesso che cercherà d'investigare qualche cosa et che me lo farà sapere et son certo che lo farà, perche l'ho trovata sempre tanto sincera et tanto libera in tutte le cose verso di me et in particolare in quelle che toccano al servitio di Vostra Altezza quanto basti a desiderare. Mando a Vostra Altezza una copia di una lettera del Secretario dell'Ambasciatore di questo signore appresso allo Imperatore scritta a messer Iacopo degli aggiunti principale stampatore in Fiorenza. L'Ambasciatore nuovo di Lucca giunse hiersera e si chiama Marc'Antonio Gilij; mi ha detto che suoi signori han mandato un'Ambasciatore residente a Ferrara per sei mesi e che si andará poi anco confirmando di sei mesi in un anno tanto che, per quel che ho pottuto comprendere, detti Lucchesi vogliono tenere un'Ambasciatore residente appresso di Vostra Altezza come fanno qui. Il Conte Orso

di Pitigliano si trova ancor' qui e l'altro giorno fece le belle parole con me trovandomi alle murate al Perdono e mi disse che voleva venire a visitarmi, ma io non mi curo troppo di sue visite, perche dicono che è uno di quei pazzi che mena le mani et non fa parole. Si dice che questo signore non lo vuole in nessuna maniera in Fiorenza. Dicono che noi altri andremo col signor Duca a Pisa ma per quello che si dice bisognerà che ci facciamo le spese da noi, cosa che mi è parso strana, non si usando questo alla Corte di Vostra Altezza. E morta di goccia la moglie del Frontorio il qual è Podesta qui et non è campata più che cinque o sei hore. Non voglio anche restar di dirle che vi è un'altro Giudice di Rota qui, suddito di Vostra Altezza, il qual però si fa chiamare da Bologna ma mi ha detto il Frontorio che è da Bagnacavallo, et è delli Hercolani. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente bascio le mani pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che io suo devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore le dessidero. Di Firenze gli 28 di Gennaro 1576.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 4 February 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Scrissi a Vostra Altezza per lordinario passato che il signor Mario Santa Fiore andava a Livorno per invitare il signor Don Giovanni. Ho inteso dipoi che non solamente è andato per invitarlo ma che è andato per entrare nella fortezza, non si fidando molto questo signore del castellano in questa venuta di Sua Altezza et per quel che dicono pare che Sua Eccellenza [Francesco] habbia molto sospeto questa venuta, come ha sempre havuto quando el deto signore ha toccato i suoi luoghi. Non si sa accertare per qual causa Sua Altezza venga hora, pero qui pare che si creda che venga per mettere terrore forse a Genovesi, accio che stiano saldi alla sentenza data la quale non è ancora aperta. È però tornata dal Papa [Gregory XIII] et dall'Imperatore [Maximilian II] et non si aspetta altro se non che torni dal Re Catolico [Philip II] et poi si publicherà. Molti credono che non habbiano ad acquetarsi le cose. Non voglio restare di dirle in questo proposito che, passeggiando l'altro giorno col signor Duca al Casino nela camera de lambicchi, venessimo in proposito di coteste cose di Genova et egli mi disse queste firmate parole: Io mi voglio allacciare (come si dice a Fiorenza) questa giornea che se io me n'havessi voluto spacciare[?] quella parte ch'io havessi favorito sarebbe senza dubbio nessuno stata vincitrice. Con tutto ciò è opinione di molti che egli habbia favorito gli aggregati come affermano anche i nobili Genovesi medesimi et ho trovato del medesimo parere di quella a quali ho parlato. Il signor Principe di Massa [Alberico I Cibo Malaspina] mi ha scritto hora di nuovo come suol fare molto spesso in raccomandarmi il suo Auditore il quale ha mandato qui per le cose della signora Leonora [Eleonora Cibo] sua sorella. Mi ha pregato di nuovo ch'io faccia fede a Vostra Altezza quanto le sia servitore et credo certo per quello che ho potuto conoscere che le sia tanto affetionato quanto nessun'altro. Et che in tutte le sue occasioni ricorrerà sempre a Vostra Altezza. La signora Leonora sua sorella mi ha detto che crede che havrà bisogno del favore di Vostra Altezza et che se le occorrerà me lo farà sapere perche lei non vuole adoperare il mezo di questo signore in nessuna maniera, contentandosi[?] di restar cosi mal satisfatta com'ella è. Ho risposto che Vostra Altezza non mancherà di favorirla sempre in tutte le occasioni come conoscerà da gli effetti. Il Cavaliere salviati si ritrova molto travagliato per la risposta che le ho dato et a me pare che habbia volonta di volere in tutti i modi dedicare questa sua opera a Vostra Altezza. Io certo gli sono molto obligato per le amorevolezze che mi usa continuamente et anche mi fa cortesia di stare alle volte due et tre hore il giorno con me per insegnarmi qualche

cosa, si della lingua toscana come anche delle altre cose, et hora si è pigliato fatica di fare una regoletta di detta lingua per me et è di opinione che quelli che l'hanno fatte fin qui habbiano fatto di molti errori, et dice che si obliga di mostrarlo. Egli è estimado qui per il primo huomo che sia in Fiorenza nelle cose della lingua et anche forse nelle altre cose di lettere. Et che sia il vero nessuno fa cosa che non ricerchi il suo parere et i cortegiani di questa corte come ignoranti ne fanno però poco conto, dicendo che è filosofo et lui si è risoluto di non andare mai nelle camere del signor Duca, et che sia il vero mi ha accompagnato due o tre volte sino a palazzo et poi se n'è subito tornato indietro, facendo scusa con me che mi terrà sempre compagnia in tutti i luoghi eccetto che in Palazzo, et ha speranza una volta di havere a servire Vostra Altezza conoscendola per Principe che fa molta stima di virtuosi et tanto più de nobili come egli è. Il Muscio[?], il qual erra venuto qui per accomodarsi al [?] di questo signore, non guardando che fosse vecchio, e passato a miglior' vita essendo a una villa di messer Ludovico Capponi, et erra molto imo amico e stava alle volte a ragionar' con me dua o tre hore et anco che fosse di età di novantauno anni erra nondimeno ancora huomo di grandissima memoria e di saldo giudicio; si laudava molto della [?] di Vostra Altezza dicendo che dal signor suo Padre di felice memoria haveva ricevuto molte grazie e molti favori. Il Fiscale mi ha dimandato s'è vero che Vostra Altezza si sia offerto all'Imperatore di accompagnarlo in Polonia; gli ho risposto che non ne so niente ma che non mi pareria cosa nova, havendo Vostra Altezza altre volte servito Sua Maestà con la sua persona. Il signor Mario santa fiore, ancorche habbia havuto il luogo del signor Chiappino, non gli hanno accresciuto però la provisione sendo 500 Δ.ti l'anno di più. Questo signor non manca di continuare l'amore della Bianca la quale è venuta a termine che la signora Donna Leonora et la signora Donna Isabella la vanno a corteggiare a casa et la menano in cocchio con loro. Et quando vogliono qualche favore o grazia adoperano il mezo di lei, et Sua Altezza se ne va molto melancolica vedendosi anche poco apprezzata da dette Principesse. L'Antinori Arcivescovo di Pisa si è partito et è andato a residere al suo arcivescovado; non voglio restar' di dirle che codesto gentil'huomo mi ha visitato molte volte et mi ha honorato molto et ha mostrato nelle cortesie che ha usato a me di esser molto servitore di Vostra Altezza. Il figliolo del [?] Hippolito Pagani mi ha detto che vuole rinuntiare la croce di santo stefano dicendo che non gli è stato esteso quel che gli è stato promesso. Io non gli ho risposto et son entrato in altro ragionamento essendo che non credo cosi ogni cosa. Et anche mi vo imaginando qualche volta che qualcuno col mezo di questi mi volesse fare uscire fuori come

sogliono usare questi huomini di questi paesi ne quali, certo a dire il vero a Vostra Altezza, io scopro ogni di maggiore malignità, non parlo di tutti, ma della maggiore parte, sì che chi sta qui bisogna esser molto cauto, et questo signor fa professione di sapere fin quello che si fa nelle case, come si vive et per conseguenze costoro bisogna che siano la maggior parte spie. Con tutto questo egli non diventa niente prudente poi che si lascia governare come huomo che non sappia niente et quel che è peggio da una femmina per non dire putana. È venuto nova che l'Arcivescovo di Pisa assalito da una febre Pestilenciale e da dolori colici è gionto quasi all'estremo della vita, cosa che da molto fastidio a questo signore et anco a tutta la corte per esser' egli gentil'huomo molto qualificato. Si dice anche che il signor Don Giovanni si è fermato a Napoli e non [?] fin tanto che non torna una risposta di spagna, con tutto ciò Mario santa fiore sta in Livorno aspettandolo. Si è concluso matrimonio come haverà inteso Vostra Altezza tra il signor Iacomo Buoncompagni con la figlia del conte di santa fiore, della qualcosa questo signore si è molto rallegrato per quel che si vede; si è tenuto quasi per fermo sin hora ch'ella dovesse esser del Marchese di Massa. Si è detto qui dal popolo che il signor Don Giovanni haveva [?] in Genova col signor Marco Centurioni. Il signor Duca è stato un poco rafredato et si è sentito un poco male però non è stato in letto altrimenti non ha molto buonaciera. Si è data la colpa del suo male al stare troppo nella camera della fornace dove egli fa fondere il cristallo di montagna et già ne ha fatto fare vasi et bichieri; quando sua Eccellenza me ne havrà dato qualcuno, come mi ha promesso, gli manderò a Vostra Altezza. Il signor Carlo Gonzaga arrivò qui hieri l'altro sera tornato da Napoli, et partì hieri; Non mi è [?] [?] [?] [?] che parti per nessuna parte. Non mancherò di stare avertito et quando ve ne saranno ne darò avviso a Vostra Altezza. Il signor [?] Vincenzo Vitelli ha fatto un presente alla Bianca di 600 scudi tra argenti et lingerie di fiandra, per vedere con questo mezo di fuggire di pagare le gabelle della heredità o per dir meglio donativo, perche essendo egli bastardo non si chiama qui heredità et si pagano le gabelle doppi [?]; con tutto ciò si crede che non le fuggirà ma per causa del presente fatto potria havere qualche dilatione di tempo. La signora Marchesa non vuole più aspettare ma vuole che le siano dati o li terreni comprati del suo o li 43/m scudi che diede in dote. Et vuole anche che le siano dati i mobili che si trovaranno in una casa che si chiama il Giardino che le lascia il signor Chiappino et non vuole uscir delle Murate finche sta in Fiorenza perche dice che non potrebbe starvi d'altra maniera essendo tanto mal soddisfatta quanto è. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza Humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio

quella felicità et accressimento di stato che io suo verissimo et devotissimo servitore le
dessidero. Di fiorenza gli 4 di Febraio 1576.

Diu Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 18 February 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Ho scritto a Vostra Altezza due altre mie, dandole conto del successo del privilegio, et credo che già le havra ricevute una dopo l'altra però non le replicherò altro sopra ciò. Il signor mario santafiore parti non hier l'altro per Pisa per incontrare la moglie del figlio del Papa, la quale si dice che sarà qui domani se però il maltempo non la impedisse. Il Fiscale mi disse hieri che si aspettava l'Ambasciatore di Venetia il qual viene risoluto di trattar' questo signore [Francesco] di Serenissimo et di Altezza. Mi disse anco che potrebbe essere che Vostra Altezza farebbe il medesimo havendo sempre mostrato buona volontà verso questo signore et se non l'ha fatto sin hora che è stato per haverne cosi comissione dall'Imperatore [Maximilian II]. Mi disse di più che questo signore, ogni volta che l'Imperatore accennasse, che lui sarebbe uno de primi che trattarebbe Vostra Altezza co'i titoli tolti, facendo professione di desiderar occasione di mostrarle la sua buona volontà. Pare anco che si dica che il Duca di Savoia sia per mandar qui un suo Ambasciatore residente, ma non cosi tosto per quel che si dice; mi disse anche il Fiscale che il privilegio non s'era fatto senza espresso consiglio del Re Catolico che Sua Maestà lo trattarebbe anchegli di Granduca. Il mio nonesser stato alla cerimonia è stato laudato piu tosto da ognuno che biasmato et anco dall'interessati medesimi, ancora che io mostrassi di esser impedito piu tosto da un poco d'indispositione che non da altra causa. Dicano che faranno presto cambio del signor Canigiani in un altro Ambasciatore, ma non si sa ancora il certo chi habbia a esser, facendo egli grandissima istanza di ritornaresene a Firenze, allegando che è stato costa dodeci anni. Dicono che nel ritorno sarà di Consigliere et che oltre a questo harrà anco da questo signore qualche officio d'Importanza. Han' posto un hebrea che stava in palazzo et molto favorita di Sua Altezza nel Monastero di San Clemente con grandissimo rumore et la causa è stata per haver detta giovane dato una lettera di Sua Altezza a uno che la mandasse via; si crede che andasse all'Imperatore, ma costui l'ha assai Iniata[ingannata?] et l'ha fatta capitare in mano del signor Duca, ma lo saprò meglio essendo che vi è in detto Monastero una monaca vecchia lombarda di Manfredi che è mia amica, per esser lombarda et de Manfredi, et è amicissima di questa giovane che da lei spero di saperne il tutto, se ben che detta giovane ha detto a detta Monaca queste precise parole: Sua Altezza sara sforzata un giorno ad andarsi con Dio da costui peche è diventato un Diavolo et ogni sera quando torna a casa ei non fa altro che cridar alla povera signora dicendole che è una donna debole et che non è buona a nulla et le ha detto sino che è una bestia; ella li

volse replicare una sera et lui le x[?] volse dare et la Contessa di Bagno se l'interpose dicendo guardate signore come fate, et lui le disse taci tu ruffiana. Questo lo so certo perche detta Hebreia l'ha referto a detta Monaca; hor veda Vostra Altezza quanta ragione ha l'Imperatore de fare tali favori a questo signore trattando cosi male le cose sue. Ha mandato Sua Altezza una Donna, che si chiama Madonna Laura in Allemagna a posta per acconciar il capo a cotesto signore all'Italiana, la quale l'ha detto che vuol far saper come vien trattata questa povera signora. Si è anche detto che la signora Donna Leonora voleva anche lei andarsi con Dio, si per la mala compagnia che le fa il signor Don Pietro suo marito, si anche per li affronti che le fa continuamente il signor Duca; investigaro di saper ogni cosa minutamente et ne daro raguaglio a Vostra Altezza. La signora Marchesa di Citona [Eleonora Cibo] dice che s'ella havesse un poco di servitù con l'Imperatore che lei medesima gli vorrebbe scrivere una lettera in darle conto delli trattamenti che vengono fatti a questa povera signora, accio che Sua Maesta si riconoscesse delli errori che fa in favorir' tanto questo signore, et prometto a Vostra Altezza che la signora Marchesa si è tanto contristata di questo privilegio quanto di cosa chele potesse avvenire. Mi disse anche: habbi pur pazienza il Serenissimo Granduca et dissimuli per un pezzo che all'ultimo havrà quel che vorrà et lei non manca hora di far fare continue orationi alle murate per Vostra Altezza accioche il signor Iddio la prosperi et li dia il compimento d'ogni suo honorato desiderio. Mi mostro la detta signora una lettera di Mondragone nella quale faceva memoria molto amorevole di me mostrando di essermi molto affetionato et le scriveva che a giorni passati parlando al regente di Napoli, qual è Zio della moglie di detto Mondragone, con signor Don Giovanni Sua Altezza disse verso il Regente: gran cosa che questo Duca di Firenze habbi tanto in odio i spagnuoli, havendo mandato via Mondragone che a me par pure che gliera buon servitore et anco [?] delli altri. Il Regente rispose: non sa Vostra Altezza come quel signore è amico di noi altri. Don Giovanni rispose sorridendo io lo so molto bene et ne tengo memoria et se Mondragone gli havesse detto quel che si diceva nella camera di Sua Eccellenza quando egli si trovava qui havria anche detto signore molto piu ragione di haver mala volonta, perche per burlarlo lo chiamavano Don Giovanni dalla lastra. Diceva anche detto Mondragone in quella sua lettera che Vostra Altezza era molto amata dal signor Don Giovanni et da tutti quei signori spagnuoli et a questo proposito la signora marchesa mi disse: Sua Altezza attendi qui dove havra sempre quel honor che merita un tanto gran Principe. Si va pur dicendo tuttavia che il signor Don Pietro uscirà fuori generale a buon tempo con dieci galere. Il frataccio si affatica pur intorno

all'historia ma Vostra Altezza stia pur di buon animo ch'io mi credo che l'habbiamo a veder prima che la dia alla stampa di un buon pezzo. Il Nontio si parti hieri con mala satisfattione. Questo servitore di Sua Santità per quel che si è visto dalla lettera che li ha scritto il Cardinale di Como, la qual era di tre versi soli di questo tenor: il Papa ha eletto il vostro successore, si che voi vi potrete licentiar ogni volta che vorrete et andarvene ove vi tornera piu comodo, et questo è malissimo segno, non lo chiamando a Roma ancor che lui vi sia andato subito, sicche il pover huomo havra riportato questo premio per l'adulatione che usava a questo signore, che prometto a Vostra Altezza che era una cosa strana a veder come l'adulava e come lo serviva che pareva che non aspettasse premio da altri che da Sua Eccellenza, et però ne ha havuto questo mal guiderdone. Si dice, ma non si sa però certo, che l'Imperatore ha domandato impresto 200/m ▼.di a questo signore et che lui gleli ha donati. Mercori sera successe una questione tra il signor Prospero Colonna et il signor Orso Orsino di Pitigliano et fu di questa maniera: il signor Prospero si ritrovava in cocchio con cinque huomini con lui et dui a piedi et il Conte di Pitigliano a piedi con due huomini et un ragazzo, et vedendo il signor Prospero detto Conte, smonto di cocchio et si vide metter mano alla spada a detto Conte et al signor Prospero et tirarsi una buona botta per uno ma immediate tutti cacciarono mano alle spade et furono tutti addosso al Conte et lo atterno di maniera che egli ha havuto quattordici ferite quasi tutte mortali, ma non è pero ancora morto; et subito il signor Prospero se n'andò, il quale non è stato molto lodato in questo caso havendo havuto detto Conte cosi grossa sopercheria, pero egli si scusa dicendo essersi atto fatto tutto contra sua volontà, come vedra Vostra Altezza dalla qui inclusa scrittura sua, la quale mandò il giorno dopo che se ne fuggì, la qual scrittura è levata dall'originale di parola in parola che se ben vi sono molte voci che non vogliono dir nulla non l'ho pero voluta alterar ne sminuirla. Non voglio restar di dirle che hieri mattina una gentildonna de Strozzi maritata in uno de Capponi essendo sana et di buona voglia volendo uscirsene per andarsene alla messa gli cadde la goccia et subito spirò. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che io suo vero et devotissimo servitore le dessidero.

Di Firenze gli xviii di Febraio M.D.L.xxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 25 March 1576: Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Gionse domenica sera l'Ambasciatore di Venecia, il quale si chiama il signor Andrea Gussoni, accompagnato da circa cinquanta cavali tra quali vi errano da venticinque huomini vestiti molto honorevolmente che dicono loro che sono gentilhuomini. Fu incontrato dal signor Don Pietro fuori della porta un tiro d'arcobugio accompagnato da tutta la corte et da molte altri gentilhuomini della citta et gli fu dato la mandestra, et fu accompagnato da Sua Eccellenza fin al Palazzo di Pitti, dove l'hanno alloggiato tanto sontuosamente che non vi ho mai veduto alloggiare ne Principi ne signori tanto honorevolmente come lui. Hebbe udienza Marti mattina nella sala, ma non in quella grande, la quale era apparato di razzi di seta con oro et argento molto belli con l'ombrella da un capo di brocato d'oro et di veluto cremesino, sotto la quale era un Palchetto alto poco meno di mezo braccio dove erano due sedie una per il signor Duca [Francesco] et l'altra per l'Ambasciatore. Il ragionamento fu tutto di complimento in rallegrarsi et dei titoli di Sua Santità [Gregory XIII] et di quelli che gli ha dato Sua Maestà [Maximilian II] et lo trattò sempre di Altezza Serenissima et ogni volta che lo nominava fu notato che si alzava sempre un poco dalla sedia et si levava la beretta. Quando lo mandorno a pigliare che venisse a Palazzo vi andò tutta la corte et lo accompagnò, havendo molti cavalli inanzi et molti di dietro, essendo egli nel mezo con molti staffieri innanti vestiti alla sua livrea che è molto bella, et doppo che fu finita l'udienza lo accompagnarono medesimamente a Pitti. Gli fanno una Tavola ordinariamente sera et mattina di 40 persone et nella sala dove mangia sta continuamente un Buffetto ornato di vasi d'oro et d'argento bellissimi con Candellieri per le torze d'argento molto alti et molto ben lavorati. Tutto il Palazzo e appato di sopra et di sotto d'oro et di seta con letti bellissimi di brocato d'oro rizzo et d'argento. Quando va a spasso per la Terra è accompagnato da tre carrozze fornite di veluto et da molti altri cocchi dietro. Gli hanno deputato per tenirgli compagnia il signor Angiolo Guicciardini, il signor Cirio Alidosio, il Cavaliere Gadi, il signor Enea Vaina, et altri che tengono poi compagnia a quegli altri gentilhuomini. Mangiò hiermattina a Palazzo et il signor Duca gli mostrò tutte le Gioie et tutte le cose sue belle. Dicono che hanno anco negoziato per un Ambasciatore residente, il quale si crede certo che verrà qui. La sapra poi per quello che mi è stato referto che questo Ambasciatore non resta molto soddisfatto di Vostra Altezza dicendo che gli è stata usata poca cortesia in Ferrara et si lasciano intendere che sono stati accompagnati dalla guardia come se fossero stati

amorbati et che si sapeva bene che erano sani. Tutto questo mi ha detto Lorenzo Guicciardini; potrebbe anco essere che non fosse vero et che lui me lo havesse detto per malignita. Dicono anche i Maligni che Vostra Altezza ha procurato che questo Ambasciatore non venghi et che pero gli è stato usato questo [?] in Ferrara. Resta poi egli tanto satisfatto di questo signore che ne va predicando et mi trovai apunto hieri dal Nontio quando lo venne a visitare che se ne lodò tanto che non si potria imaginar piu. Io l'ho visitato et mi ha fatto tanto honore et tante carezze quanto basti a desiderare. Egli è stato poi tanto grato a questo signore quanto nessun'altro Ambasciatore o personaggio che sia mai venuto in questa Corte per quello che si dice. La signora Bianca le ha fatto recitare quella comedia che fece recitare questo Carnevale per trattenerlo et gli fa hoggi un banchetto che dicono è molto bello et di grandissima spesa. Si partirà, per quello ch'egli dice, Luni. Si crede anche che questo signore l'appresentera di presenti bellissimi. [?] arrivò l'Ambasciatore di Genova con dodici poste accompagnato da quattro o cinque gentilhuomini tutti vestiti ricchissimamente. È stato alloggiato in palazzo et è stato molto ben visto et accarezzato, come sono stati tutti gli altri Ambasciatori che sono venuto per questo effetto; egli ha visitato me et io lui et non ha visitato però ne il Nontio ne nessun'altro Ambasciatore et si partì hieri alli vent'un hora. Quel di Parma et quel di Urbino non visitarono me, ne io loro. Si dice che verrà presto quel di Savoia per il medesimo complimento. Questo signore ha fatto fare sempre diligente guardia per Ven.a et hora dice che non vi è mal nessuno et il disse apunto hieri al Noncio, il quale gli rispose che egli havea lettere di Roma che gli dicevano d'altra maniera. Arrivò hieri un secretario del Cardinale Medici [Ferdinando] per le Poste, non si è ancora potuto penetrare per quello che sia venuto. Non mancherò di procurare di sottrarlo et n'aviserò Vostra Altezza. Mando a Vostra Altezza certi avisi ancorche siano vecchi, con certi versi quali furono cantati nelle nozze del Signor Castel.o che mi mandò il Nuntio due giorni sono. Mandoli anco certi versi che mi sono stati dati fatti sopra il Re di Francia, i quali sono stati giudicati molto ingegnosi ancorche un poco mordaci. Ella saprà poi che questi signori et signore mostrano di vedermi ogni giorno più volentieri, et in particolare il signor Duca, il quale mi fa grandissimi favori et ha ordinato hora al suo maggiordomo che mi muti casa, essendo questa lontana da Palazzo et anco stretta per me et che mi dia una delle migliori che si possa havere et paghi quanto si voglia, et ogni volta che egli mi vede, mi domanda minutamente di Vostra Altezza et per quello che si vede esteriormente con molta affettione. Ha fatto mettere prigione il Boncio nelle secrete molti giorni sono, et dicono per Fiorenza che è stato per

havere egli parlato contra di Vostra Altezza quel giorno che si publico il privilegio et dicono che lo vuol far mettere nelle stinche, et che vuole che egli vi finisca la sua vita, perche non vuol che sia parlato di Principi pari suoi senon di quel modo et con quella riverenza che si conviene. Io non so però certo se sia per questo, ma si dice cosi publicamente. L'Ambasciatore è andato questa mane a vedere le fortezze et quando l'hanno scoperto gli hanno fatto una salva di molti pezzi d'artiglieria. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le dessideriamo.

Di Firenze gli xxv di Marzo M.D.L.xxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 15 April 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Domenica mattina ringratiai il signor Duca [Francesco] delle Lamprede che mandò a Vostra Altezza et li appresentai in nome suo il sturione et il Caviale, il quale egli hebbe molto caro et mi disse con amorevolissime parole ch'io ringraziassi Vostra Altezza per parte sua, et che le dicessi che lo favoriva troppo. Mi fece entrare in Camera mentre che si faceva allacciare, cosa che non ha mai piu fatto, ne è usato di fare, et prima che io le dicessi che fosse di fatto commando che fosse aperto et che dell'ova fusse fatto del caviaro. Mi domandò di che sorte di pesce era quel caviaro che non era di sturione, et perche non mi fu scritto, non glie lo seppi dire; l'hebbe tanto caro che lo fece mettere in camera et non volse altramente ch'andasse alla dispensa. Si fece anche lasciare parecchie libre di sturione per mandare a donare et si dice che lo mandò alla Bianca; il resto ha voluto che se le cuoci a poco a poco, per quello che mi ha detto il Maiordomo, et m'ha detto che l'è piaciuto molto. Non lo scrissi a Vostra Altezza per quello che lo porto perche io era già a Palazzo quando giunse, et mi parti per far solo quattro parole al Cavaliere Tassone della ricevuta et mi solecitai per essere a tempo di andar a messa con Sua Eccellenza. Mi disse poi detto signore mentre eravamo a messa che havea mandato circa 400 o 500 Mandorle a Vostra Altezza et mi domandò come le sarebbon care et come n'era di[?] in Ferrara. Io le risposi che non li potevano essere se non carissime tutte le cose che le venivano da Sua Eccellenza. Qui si dice che questo signore donerà Monte SanSovino al Castellano. Si è anche detto che se Sua Santità [Gregory XIII] veniva a Bologna, che non fosse stata impedita dalla peste, che nel ritorno passava per Fiorenza et che questo signore lo procurava per essere incoronato, et questo ha detto il Gardarobba alla signora Leonora Cibo. Mi trovai l'altra mattina con sua eccellenza quando disse al Nuntio che solecitava che si finisse la fabrica di Pratolino, perche quivi voleva alloggiare Sua Santità una sera ancorche avesse detto prima, come scrissi a Vostra Altezza, che non credeva la sua venuta. Et perche Vostra Altezza sappia ogni minucia che occorre qui, non voglio restar di dirle che a questi giorni passati una donna di bonissima vita pregò un Prete suo confessore che volesse andare a dire al signor Duca che volesse hormai lasciar' la pratica della Bianca et gli altri suoi peccati, perche la prevedeva che era hormai vicino il fin suo con la ruina di se et della casa sua, ma il Prete non le volse andare ancorche molte volte fosse pregato, et lei al fine si risciolse di andarci in persona et vi andò et le parlò. Lui non rispose altro senon che li domandò chi la confessava, et lei glie lo disse. Sua Eccellenza subito mandò a chiamare questo suo

confessore, che è un Prete di bonissima vita et estimado quasi che santo, et gli dimandò della vita di cotesta donna. Lui le rispose che erano molti anni che la confessava et che era donna di santissima vita. Sua Eccellenza mandò subito un suo paggio de caponi alle Murate a parlar all'Abbadessa acciò che la pigliasse, ma lei fu consigliata, a dire il vero a Vostra Altezza, et dalla signora Leonora [Eleonora Cibo] et dalle altri a ricusarla, et cosi si escusò di non potere per essere troppo stretta di alloggiamento. Sua Eccellenza la mandò ad un'altro Monastero che si chiama san spirito et le ha costituito una provisione, oltre il vitto et vestito, di 40 scudi l'anno. Tutto questo mi disse hieri apunto la detta signora Leonora la quale ha inteso il tutto dall'Abbadessa, che ha saputo tutto questo da una sua sorella che è nelle Monache di santo spirito et dal Prete medesimo; non so però se questo sia vero et mi pare che sia una cosa non molto degna d'essere creduta, ma come si sia le dico l'auttore che me l'accerta per vero, ma io ho qualche amico nei Frati di Valombrosa quali governano coteste Monache onde cercherò con bel modo di accertarmi della verità. L'Auditore del Principe di Massa, quale è un huomo vecchio et molto savio, che si trovò presente quando la signora Leonora me lo disse, rispose: il Cardinale Cibo, il quale era molto mio patrone, mi disse che al Duca Alessandro fu predetta la sua ruina nel medesimo modo da una Donna. Con tutto ciò la Bianca si da un buontempo et vuol metter le mani non solamente nelle cose temporali ma anche nel spirituale, havendo voluto in questi giorni che un Prete habbia un beneficio al dispetto del Vicario et del Collegio essendo stato conosciuto per ignorante; con tutto questo l'ha havuto, et quando il Concino le parlò gli disse: Monsignore voi volete star qui poco. Ella è venuta a tanta grandezza che ha fatto fare hora li paramenti alle sue Camere di Brocato d'oro rizho et di veluto cremisino, et questo signore ogni sera et ogni mattina quando si parte dal Casino non va in altro luogo che a dar la volta intorno la sua casa, come non la vedesse mai et non la godesse. La signora Donna Leonora si è cominciata a levare et ha anco incominciato ad uscir di casa però in lettica. Si dice che la signora Duchessa è gravida, ma non ne sono però ancor chiaro afatto. Il signor Don Pietro va seguitando di pigliar l'acqua del legno ma si crede che la fara mali mangiando ogni giorno cinque et sei Carchiofoli con 30 et 40 mandorle, ne vuol restar di far disordini ancorche il signor Duca sia andato a gridargli. Pare che più questo signore viene in età gli manchi tanto più il cervello, stando egli continuamente a giocare alla trotola nelle sue camere, et chi lo vuole visitare bisogna che ne porti una altrimenti non è veduto volentieri. Qui hanno bandito Mant.a si è anco detto che vi e qualche sospetto di Genova per certi barche che vi sono arrivati di Cicilia, ma non se ne sa però niente di

certo. Il Prencipe di Massa è arrivato hoggi, si per visitare questo signore, si anche per finir di accomodare le cose di sua sorella col signor Giovanni Vincenzo qual sono in bonissimo termine. Io non l'ho ancor visto ma mi dicono i suoi che non si fermerà qui più di due giorni. Il signor Don Alfonso ha mandato al Conte di Nuvolara doi sturioni in dobba, ma con tutto ciò mi hanno detto i suoi che sono quasi che fracidi, gliele anco mandato sei Baratoli di caviaro, ma dicono anche che è troppo salato. Detto Conte mandò subito un Sturione al signor Duca et credo che gli manderà anche il Caviaro, ma non gli piacerà forse, mangiando egli continuamente di quello di Vostra Altezza. Se Vostra Altezza mandasse un sturione di ova fresco credo che sarebbe molto grato a questo signore per quello che ho potuto comprendere dalle parole del Maiordomo, ancorche non li habbia lasciato intendere affatto. Vostra Altezza saprà poi che mi mutano la casa et me ne danno una più bella, la quale paga 140 scudi di pigione, non havendo mai pagato più che 60 di fitto allo Ambasciatore di Ferrara ma il signor Duca ha voluto che io n'habbia una comoda et in bellissimo lato. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le dessideriamo.

Di Firenze gli xv d'Aprile 1575 [should read 1576].

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 28 April 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Questo signore [Francesco], dopo il male di stomaco che hebbe come scrissi a Vostra Altezza, non sta molto bene et ancor che vada in volta ha nondimeno secondo il mio giudicio una mala ciera. La Bianca ancor lei non sta bene et io la vidi con una mala ciera l'altro giorno, che poco innanzi era uscita di letto che andava dietro al cocchio di sua Eccellenza. Dicono poi che il signor Duca è diventato tanto fastidioso in casa che non fa mai altro che gridare, et con la signora Duchessa [Giovanna] et con tutti, come faceva a giorni passati. Tre giorni sono Monsignor Nontio et io fummo a visitar Sua Altezza et la trovammo molto di malavoglia; mi dimandò però minutamente dell'essere di Vostra Altezza et mi comandò ch'io mi lasciassi vedere piu spesso. La signora Donna Leonora ancora lei si trova tanto mal sodisfatta, si del marito si anche di questo signore, che ha grandissima voglia di tornare a Napoli et ha detto di volere scrivere al signor Marco Antonio Colonna suo Aio et anche al Duca d'Alva de mali trattamenti che le sono fatti qui. Et l'altro giorno apunto quando fu con me a disinare restò lei sola con una sua Dama favorita et mentre che in camera parlava, di quando in quando le venivano le lagrime dagli occhi, et gia havea cominciato a raccontare a mia moglie et a me parte di suoi travagli quando vi sopravvenne Mario santa Fiore il quale non mi ha mai più visitato dopo ch'io son qui, ne vi venne però anche per me ma per lei, essendone egli come sa Vostra Altezza molto innamorato, ancorche da molti giorni in qua lei nol vegga con molto buono occhio. Qui si è piu a termine che chi vuole favore bisogna andare in tutti i modi per mezzo della Bianca et la signora Donna Isabella et la signora Donna Leonora la cortegiano a casa come sua mag.re et Mario Santa fiore vi fa stare continuamente la sua moglie che l'accompagna et la serve come se fosse sua serva, cose che danno malissima sodisfattione a tutti. Il Principe di Massa si partì molto presto di qui come scrissi a Vostra Altezza per l'altra mia, ne vi sarrà manco venuto senon fusse stato per accomodar le cose della signora Leonora [Eleonora Cibo] sua sorella, non essendo egli molto sodisfatto di questi paesi. A me usò tutte le cortesie, per essere Ambasciatore di Vostra Altezza, fincon l'accompagnarmi a casa. Mi ha scritto dopo che si è partito che desidererebbe ch'io andassi per quattro o sei giorni sino a Massa, et io gli ho risposto ch'io lo farei quando il singor Duca andasse a Pratolino per qualche giorno come si dice et che Vostra Altezza si contentasse di darmi Licenza. Qui si disse l'altro giorno che il Conte di Novellara pigliava per moglie la signora Leonora moglie che fu del signor Chiappino et cosi dissi a detta signora sorridendo et lei mi rispose che

non era più in termine ne in età di maritarsi, che quando fosse stata non l'havrebbe pigliato lui in nessuna maniera havendo havuto Cavaliere di molto più valore di lui, et che quando se havesse voluta maritare havrebbe voluto che il serenissimo Gran Duca di Ferrara l'havesse maritata et non altri et lei sempre nomina Vostra Altezza di questa maniera con tutti, et con la signora Duchessa et con tutte quelle altre signore che la vanno a visitare, et non può patire a sentirla nominare d'altra maniera. Lei continuamente cerca di sapere molte cose per avisarmene acciò ch'io ne avisi Vostra Altezza et per via di Monache et de frati et d'altri amici che ella ha in Fiorenza. Non hieri l'altro tornò il figliolo del secretario Concino, quale era Ambasciatore alla Corte Cesarea, et è stato molto ben visto et accarezzato et honorato da questi signori et da tutta la Corte. S'intende che sua eccellenza resta tanto sodisfatto del suo secretario quanto di nessun altro servitore che si habbia mai havuto. Havrà il luogo di messer Lelio Torelli come io ho scritto a Vostra Altezza, ma con maggiore autorità ancora di quella che havea lui in questo [?]. Il giorno di Pasqua fummo alla messa solenne et mi [?] il mio luogo solito ma mi honorarono di piu del solito perche soleano coprire il mio luogo di veluto cremisimo con in confine del medesimo, et quello del signor Duca et del Nontio di brocato, et questo anno non mi hanno differenziato niente da loro, havendo parato il mio luogo medesimo di brocato con li confini ancora di brocato, et il secretario Concino et il secretario serguidi dissero che il Canegiani scrivea a sua eccellenza delli buoni parlamenti et dell'honore che vostra Altezza gli faceva, et dissero che il signor Duca restava molto satisfatto di lei per gli effetti che mostrava verso il suo Ambasciatore. Il Fiscale, il quale non vuole troppo bene al Canigiani, mi domandò l'altro giorno s'egli faceva tanta spesa che in Ferrara non potesse stare con tre scudi il giorno come ha di provisione, dicendomi che con questa scusa egli ha domandato licenza parecchie volte. Io gli risposi ch'io l'havea veduto sempre viver et stare [?] non che del resto io non ne sapeva altro. Credo che questo uomo voleva chiarirsi per potere referire [?] come fa molto detto Canegiani et forse anche perche non vorrebbe veder costà uno che facesse cosi buone relazioni, essendo egli per dire il vero a Vostra Altezza huomo assai piu che un poco maligno. Si dice che manderanno in luogo del Concino alla Corte Cesarea il signor Ciro Alidosio, ma però non si sa ancora il certo. È tornato da Genova quel che mandò sua eccellenza per chiarirsi se vi era sospetto di peste et ha referto di no, mache è ben vero che morì uno in una barca che veniva di verso sicilia, ma che si è trovato che morì di male ordinario. La settimana passata morirono qui otto o nove di male subittanea et dicono che fu goccia. Di quella donna ch'io scrissi a Vostra

Altezza che haveano posta nel Monastero dello spirito santo, si è verificato che è vero et che non solo ha predetto ciò che io havea scritto a Vostra Altezza ma che ha anche scoperto di molte cose della Bianca et che a sua istanza l'hanno posta quivi. Questo mi ha detto la signora Leonora Cibò. Qui non passa mai notte che non venga assassinato qualcuno. Non è ancor venuto l'ord.o di Genova et per questo si è dubitato che [?] loro non vi sia qualche cosa di nuovo, pero li giudici criminali gli hanno levato le armi di mano et apunto hieri l'auditor del signor Principe di Massa che è Genovese mi disse che haveano parlato al Palazzo di detti giudici quattro carra d'Archibugetti. Il signor Mario santa fiore partì il giorno di San Marco su le poste con grandissima fretta per Roma, havendo havuto aviso che suo figliolo era vicino a morte. Questo signore ha opinione che il Cardinale Morone habbia a passar di qui andando, come sa Vostra Altezza, in Alamagna legato alla Dieta di Ratisbona. Il Nuntio aspetta qui Monsignor di Rossano cheera Nuntio a Vinetia che se ne ritorna a Roma che se crede che Sua Santità [Gregory XIII], per quello che mi ha detto esso Nuntio, sene vorrà servire in cose di maggior importanza, amandolo molto et havendolo in bonissima consideratione; dice che andrà in suo luogo Monsignor Escada, quel che era Nuntio qui, con tutti i mali officij che habbia fatto, per quel che dicono, questo signore con Sua Santità contro di lui. Il detto Nuntio qui mi ha detto ancora che io bacia humilissimamente le mani di Vostra Altezza in nome suo, et mi ha domandato s'io credo che Vostra Altezza tenga in mente della servitù di suo padre et sua. Io gli ho risposto che credo che ella la tenga per servitore come mi pare di haver steso che habbia sempre servito suo padre et tutta la casa sua; et è vero che egli mostra certo un desiderio infinito di servir a Vostra Altezza et a me, per esser suo Ambasciatore, usa di molte cortesie, col venire a pigliarmi a casa et accompagnarmi et molti altri segni d'amorevolezza. Io procuro di tenermelo amico, con speranza di havere qualche volta a sapere qualchecosa per suo mezo; mi fa cortesia di mandarmi aveder le nove che vengono da Roma, ma io non le scrivo a Vostra Altezza imaginandomi che sia minutamente avisata del tutto da Monsignor Masetti, essendo questo che mi manda a mostrar avisi publici et conosciuti[?] ad ognuno che sia in Roma. Qui si trova Matteo che stava per staffiero da Vostra Altezza; io lo vidi l'altra mattina che ero col signor Duca et gli feci dire che mi venisse a trovare, et egli vi è stato et non mi ha voluto dire perche si sia partito da Ferrara et dallo stato. Alessandro Pagani è per venire di certo a Ferrara, per quel che mi ha detto, et alloggierà in casa di messer costantino coccapane il quale è lui che negocia la cosa sua et che tiene i suoi danari, non so però certo se verrà, perche a giorni [?] mi disse anche il medesimo et mandò poi un

suo servitore. Io mi trovo haver due arbori di Limoncello dolci quali mi ha mandati a donar il signor di Piombino, et perche sono molto stimati qui desidero mandarli a Vostra Altezza onde starò aspettando occasione di poterglele mandare comodamente. L'Ambasciatore di Savoia parti l'ultimo giorno di Pasqua et fu a visitarmi prima che partisse con molta cortesia; qui l'hanno honorato assai et usano qui quando viene uno Ambasciatore di fargli l'apparato alla Chiesa col veluto cremisino franciato g'oro coi cossini medesimi come fanno al Duca medesimo. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregando dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi servitori le desseriamo.

Di Firenze gli xxviii d'Aprile 1576.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 13 May 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Ho ricevuto la di Vostra Altezza dei vii del corente; non mancherò di obedirla in tutto quello che mi comanda. Mi è stato caro infinitamente la licenza che è piaciuto a Vostra Altezza di darmi di transferirmi sino a Massa et non per altro che per la divotione che veggo che porta quel Principe a Vostra Altezza, et a me pare di poterla assicurare che in tutte le occasioni ella si potrebbe di tutto il suo; questo dico perche trovandosi lui, la signora Leonora [Eleonora Cibo] sua sorella et io soli l'altro giorno insieme, gli senti dire che egli voleva in tutti i modi depender' sempre da Vostra Altezza et che voleva che in tutte le occasioni quel suo stato, ancorche picciolo, fosse sempre a devotione sua et che se duravano i sospetti et i rumori di Genova, una parte di quali pareva che fosse fomentata dalla parte di quà, lui era disposto di volere una guardia da Vostra Altezza come mi pare di haverli scritto altra volta. Intesi anco l'altro giorno dal suo secretario, il quale è ancor qui devotissimo servitore di Vostra Altezza come sono tutti gli altri servitori di questo signore, che pareva che si fusse detto molti mesi sono che questo signore [Francesco] avesse voluto fare una fortezza suso il suo per maggiore sicurezza del suo stato, che detto signore in nessuna maniera non voleva et che in caso di bisogno havria dato la Rocca in mano di Vostra Altezza et che l'havria supplicata che avesse voluto diffenderla, si che a me pare ch'ella possi star sicura di avere in caso di bisogno qualche cosa in queste parti. La signora Leonora, alla quale lui crede assai, non manca di ricordargli che egli è in stato per favore della Serenissima Casa sua, che d'altra maniera forse non vi sarebbe, essortandolo non haver piu riguardo a lei sola che a tutti gli altri. Io non manco continuamente di procurare di acquistare novi servitori a Vostra Altezza et di conservarli anche quelli che ha in questi parti, parendomi che a Principi grandi par suoi si convenghi lavere di servitori in tutti i luoghi. Non voglio anche restar di dirle con questa occasione che il signor di Piombino è molto servitore di Vostra Altezza et desidera infinitamente di servirla et di avere la gratia sua, et ha levato di qui affatto suo figliolo per la mala sodisfattione che ha havuto et ha continuamente di costoro, et ha detterminato per quello che egli ha fatto sapere a me di mandarlo in spagna o in qualche altra parte. Qui si dice che la Bianca è per far acquisto di un luogo del Conte Sansegondo per diciotto o venti mila scudi, et già dicono che sono a parole et quando havrà comperato questo havrà tre o quattro luoghi de piu belli che siano in questi contorni, si che a quest'hora dicono che ella si troverà il valore di settanta o ottanta mila scudi et molti dicono anche sino a cento, a talche a me pare che questo

signore l'habbia trattata molto bene con sua poca riputatione. Però il signor Mario Santafigiore tornò quattro giorni sono da Roma et è diventato tanto servitore della Bianca che lui et sua moglie la corteggiano come lor padrona, con molto suo poco honore, non parendo che cosi convenghi a un cavaliere quale egli è, a procurare favori per simili mezi et veramente par segno di dapocagine di animo. La signora Duchessa [Giovanna] sta piu malenconica che mai, essendo che lei va fuori accompagnata da dui o tre gentilhuomini et molte volte incontra la Bianca accompagnata da x e xv alla staffa del cocchio, a piedi con la moglie del signor Mario con lei, che pare la sua Donna di governo. La signora Donna Isabella è andata cinque giorni sono a stare a Cafaggiuola et pare per quello che si dice che un'altra volta se le sia tornato a gonfiare il corpo et se sarà come l'altra potrebbe risanarsi in nove Mesi. Manderò gli arbori a Vostra Altezza con la prima comodità, ma perhora ve n'è uno che e tutto fiorito et che comincia a legare et non vorrei mandarlo prima che habbia finito di legare, et manderò ancora il modo di governarli. Il signor Prencipe di Massa mi mandò quattro giorni sono un vaso di Gelsomini di Catalogna, ma egli è venuto un poco maltrattato; se riuscirà bene lo manderò anche lui, ma ho un poco di dubbio che non si voglia seccare. Il signor Cirio Alidosio è stato eletto Ambasciatore alla Dieta et partirà perdomani per quello che lui ha detto a me stamani, essendomi venuto a visitare con molta cortesia. È arrivato tre giorni sono quello che era Ambasciatore in Spagna et è stato molto ben visto et accarezzato da questo signore. Si dice che havrà una entrata di seicento scudi per poter pagare i debiti che ha fatto in spagna, quali dicono che arrivano alla somma di sei mila scudi, ancorche avesse provisione di otto scudi il giorno. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bascio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità che Io suo vero et devotissimo servitore le dessidero.

Di Firenze gli xiii di Maggio M.D.Lxxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Fascicolo 14 dated 1576:

Letter dated 29 July 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo Signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Molti giorni sono che Vostra Altezza mi comando ch'io facessi sapere alla signora Duchessa [Giovanna] ch'io havea commissione da lei di servire a Sua Altezza come alla persona sua stessa, in tutto quello ch'ella mi comanderebbe; hora la povera signora havendo bisogno si vuol valere della offerta di Vostra Altezza et perche ella sappia ogni cosa minutamente detta signora andò non hieri l'altro alle Murate, et andò tanto spasseggiando per il Monastero cola signora Leonora Cibò, che le venne comodità di ritirarsi in un camerino con detta signora, non senza molto sospetto, havendo Sua Eccellenza dato commissione alla Contessa da Bagni che sia sempre presente a quello che fa et a quello che dice, et dopo un grandissimo pianto che fece sopra la morte di Donna Leonora et di Donna Isabella, dicendo che il signor Duca era un grandissimo tiranno et un crudele et ch'havea fatto morire la Signora Donna Leonora con pochissima ragione per l'odio che porta a Don Garzia, a Don Luigi et a tutta la Casa sua, et ch'havea anche fatta morire la sorella, havendone havute molte più occasioni per lo passato che non hora, che anch'ella temea molto della vita sua, ancorche come sa tutto il mondo lei non habbia mai data causa alcuna et che havea di già scritto a Sua Maestà Cesarea [Maximilian II] suo fratello che gli mandasse un gentilhuomo qui per conferirgli di molte cose, il quale credea pure che fusse in camino, ma dubitando che non tardi troppo al suo bisogno volea ch'io con licenza di Vostra Altezza andassi a Milano, fingendo d'andare in qualche altro luogo, a pregare il signor Don Giovanni come parente suo et della casa sua che le mandassi un gentilhuomo qui il quale tardasse tanto che venisse quello dell'Imperatore, con fingere che havendo inteso che era ammalata l'havea mandato a visitare, et che con quello credeva che non gli venga guardato che non possa raccontare i suoi dispiaceri et mali portamenti che gli vengono fatti da questi signori. Voleva mandare a chiamarmi alle Murate quando vi andò, ma non si arrischiò dicendo che pongono troppa cura a tutto quello che fa, massimamente quando parla con me. Pregò adunque la signora Leonora che mi volesse fare l'Ambasciata in nome suo, et ch'io pregassi Vostra Altezza che la volesse aiutare, come cognato et parente amorevole et che non havea maggiore testimonio di me per dar conto a suoi de mali portamenti che le vengono fatti et delle attioni sue honorate, di quelli dice che si veggono in pubblico che in privato ve ne sono tanti che è una cosa grande et dice la povera signora che è venuta a tal termine che quando sente il signor Duca picchiare

alla porta della sua Camera che poco manca che non sviene, et l'altro giorno piangendo appunto la morte di quelle povere signore le sopraggiunse sopra il signor duca et le dimandò perche' piangea, et lei disse che piangea la mala fortuna di quelle povere donne, et egli insolentissimamente rispose io castigherò ancor te et molto presto. Però la povera signora prega Vostra Altezza che voglia comandare a me o a chi le parra più a proposito che faccia sapere il tutto al Signor Don Giovanni, il quale confida che procedera con quella secretezza et destrezza che ricerca il fatto. Io credo che il nostro signor Dio habbia mandato questa occasione a Vostra Altezza accioche possa mostrare all'Imperatore et a tutta la Casa sua quanto Vostra Altezza l'ami et osservi. Vostra Altezza mi fara avisare quello che havrò da fare perche la cosa ha bisogno di prestezza, et io non mancherò d'obedirla in quello che ella mi comandera. Non voglio anche restar di dirle che non hier l'altro Sua Altezza essendo venuta a messa alla Nontiata, io l'aiutai a smontare et dopo haver tenuto un poco la beretta in mano, ch'ella non se n'era aveduta, mi si voltò et mi disse ch'io mi copriessi et soggiunse, diro come disse lei, che io le perdonassi se non usava con me quelli termini di creanza ch'era obligata, che desiderava, perche il molto fastidio che ha continuamente le fanno scordare quasi desser viva. Io le risposi che non occorreva che usasse con me termine alcuno essendole io tanto servitore; ella mi rispose ch'era ben certa della mia volontà, La povera signora era tanto afflitta ch'era una compassione vederla. L'altro giorno mia moglie era con lei et per quello che ella mi ha riferito, ella mostrava grande volonta di parlarle, ma la Contessa et un'altra Fiorentina le era sempre al lato, che non poteano dire parola che non notassero. La povera signora è a tal termine che non si fida più d'alcuno però vorrebbe che in tutti i modi fusse parlato a Don Giovanni in nome suo. Vostra Altezza comandi [?] quello che le parrà ch'io faccia, che tanto farò quanto da lei mi sarà imposto. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro, a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bacio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le desseriamo.

Di Firenze gli xxviii di Luglio M.D.Lxxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Post.a La Signora Leonora Cibo mi ha detto questa sera che la signora Duchessa mi fa intendere di nuovo che io preghi Vostra Altezza per parte sua che voglia fargli questo favore di dar ordine che sia essequito questa cosa quanto prima sia possibile che tanto maggior obbligo n'havrà a Vostra Altezza. Se Vostra Altezza comandera ch'io vadi,

pigliero ordine d'andare a Massa, perche si sa già qui che Vostra Altezza m'ha data
licenza.

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 4 August 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Mi vien fatta istanza dalla signora Leonora cibo per la risposta del negotio della signora Duchessa [Giovanna] et apunto hieri detta signora mandò alle Murate dalla signora Leonora a domandargli se havea inteso ancora cosa alcuna et mandò anche dalla Abbadessa di detto Monastero a pregarla che facesse et facesse fare oratione per lei, et la signora Leonora mi domandò quanto potea tardare ad havere la risposta. Le risposi che io stava aspettando l'huomo ch'io havea mandato a posta et che fino che non era tornato che non potea dirle altro. La signora Duchessa havrebbe scritto lei med.a a Vostra Altezza ma non si è arrischiata, non havendo in Palazzo di chi si fidare, perchè una volta scrisse all'Arciduca Ferdinando per un suo negotio et colui che dovea portare le lettere le diede egli medesimo al Signor Duca [Francesco], oltreche fu poi anche avisato detto signore come ella era stata serrata in una Camera a scrivere forse due hore, di maniera che la povera signora non si arrischia neanche a pigliar più la penna in mano. Si confida assai in Vostra Altezza che non mancherà d'aiutarla in tutti quei modi ch'ella potrà, et io mi do fine a credere che quando l'Imperatore et quelli della Casa sua sapranno i mali portamenti che vengono fatti a questa signora, de quali ne posso io essere in parte buon testimonio, procederanno forse d'altra maniera con questo signore di quello che hanno fatto fin hora. Io non ho mancato di far far fede a detta signora che Vostra Altezza non mancherà mai in ogni occasione di servirla in tutto quello che saprà che sia di sua satisfattione, come conoscerà dalli effetti. Hieri passò di qui un corriero il quale viene da Napoli et va in Spagna, mandato dal Vicere, si crede che sia per il caso della signora Donna Leonora, essendo il fratello di detta signora genero del Vicere. Et dicono che questi suoi parenti non vogliono che la cosa passi di questa maniera, ma che se ne vogliono risentire in tutti i modi, et qui si dice che non le mancheranno testimoni in loro favore per difesa di detta signora. Hanno posto una Dama di detta signora in un Monastero come scrissi anche a Vostra Altezza, ne vogliono che alcuno le parli, et ella ha scritta una lettera ad una sua sorella che si trova nelle Murate et gli da conto come questi signori vorebbono che ella dicesse a loro modo in biasmo di detta signora, per mostrare che quello che hanno fatto, hanno fatto con ragione, ma che non lo vuol dire in nessuna maniera, dicendo che non ha mai visto cosa se non honorata di questa signora. Pigliarono tre di sono una che si chiama Ber.no de servi molto ricco, che facea fare un Bacco il quale andava continuamente con la signora Donna Isabella, et si crede che gli faranno fare il fine che ha fatto il Cavaliere Antinori et il pigliarono a 23 hore in piazza

che ognuno vide. Mandarono anche non hier l'altro di notte fuori la Corte per pigliare Carlo Fortunato, il quale era coppiero et scalco di detta signora Donna Isabella, ma si crede però che si sia assentato, cose che fanno credere che questi signori non habbiano molto cervello, poiche ci va di mettersi, come si suol dire, le corna che ha forse in fino sul capo, et prometto a Vostra Altezza che questa cosa il fanno tanto odiare che si comincia a parlare di lui molto liberamente. Giu.o[?] Cibò, un Mercante Genovese molto ricco, se ne sono moltati su le poste et se n'è andato a Genova et si dice che vuol serrar qui le sue ragioni[?] et appririla, o in Napoli o in qualche altro luogo, come dicono anche di fare parecchi altri mercanti i quali si lasciano intendere che non vogliono habitar' un paese cosi crudele. Quella donna che è nelle monache della quale scrissi già a Vostra Altezza, che è tenuta cosi buona et santa, ha mandato a dire un'altra volta a Sua Eccellenza ch'ella consideri fine a casi suoi perche ella dubita che Dio non voglia dar fine presto alla casa sua et levarle il stato di mano. Qui con tutti questi accidenti si sono fatti le solite allegrezze della memoria di Montemurlo quando fu preso et della rotta di Pietro Strozzi, et si sono corsi i soliti pallij a quali è intervenuto sempre il signor Duca con la Bianca dietro secondo l'ordinario. La quale va con maggior fausto che non faceva anche prima, parendole forse che non vi sia più altra Principessa che lei. Ha mandato questo signore 300 fanti delle [?] di piu all'Elba, ne si sa la cagione non vi essendo sospetto nessuno per non esservi chiarezza nessuna che l'armata Turchesca sia fuori. Qui si è cominciato a usare assai piu diligenza che non si faceva prima nelle cose della peste et Sua Eccellenza vuole che i gentilhuomini principali facciano la guardia alle porte, non si fidando piu di cittadini ordinarij che vi solevano stare, et ha fatto Comissarij sopra ciò i quali voglino che nelle bollette che si fanno della sanità si piglino gli [?] a pello et signo. Usano anche questa diligenza di mandare per le case a vedere come stanno polliti di dentro. Ho inteso però io che sono venuti per via indiretta delle lettere da Vinetia, cosa che se fusse vera sarebbe molto pericolosa. Il Nontio andrà fra due o tre giorni a visitare Volterra et le altre terre che visitava Monsignor Cast.o Vescovo di Rimini, della quale Sua Santità [Gregory XIII] è restata mal soddisfatta per havere usato più rigore di quello che si conveniva, et la causa del rimuoverlo è stata il secretario Serguidi per havere egli voluto usare severità in certe cose contra un suo fratello che è Vescovo di Volterra et anche in un certo hospitale appartenente a lui, di maniera che non bisogna offendere costoro chi non vuole essere abbassato da Sua Santità. Il Nuntio potria star fuori circa due mesi in queste visite, che gli sara un aiuto di costa, perche oltra la provigione ordinaria che ha dal Papa, havrà cinque scudi ogni

giorno da' Religiosi della città, oltre i presenti et altre cose. Uno de Ghirlinzoni da Modena che serve il Cardinale Colonna si trova qui et è fratello di quel capitano che è pregione a Ferrara; mi ha detto che è stato impedito il passaggio da Vostra Altezza a certi Sali del papa con molta mala satisfattione di Sua Santità et mi dice di più che i ministri di Vostra Altezza per esser poco pratici del mondo facevano di molti errori quali tornavano poi a danno di Vostra Altezza. Io gli risposi che i suoi Ministri erano huomini di valore et pratici et quando non fussero stati che Vostra Altezza era quella che governava i Ministri, et non i Ministri Lei. Mi replicò che non lo dicea se non per bene, essendoli tanto servitore quanto alcun'altro. Venne questo gentilhuomo due giorni prima della morte della signora Donna Leonora et mi ha detto che era venuto per trattarel'andata di essa signora a Napoli, facendone istanza il signor Marcantonio Colonna fratello della madre di detta signora, il quale dicono che ha sentito infinitamente questa morte sua. Il Cardinale Vercelli, il quale come sa Vostra Altezza si trovava a Bagni di Lucca, è passato a miglior vita. Si dice che il Duca di Mantova manderà qui un gentilhuomo a rallegrarsi et a dargli titoli a questo signore ogni volta che sia accettato, ma il Fiscale mi ha detto che questo signore non s'è mai curato che gli mandi o no, et qui si dice ch'egli voria mandar hora più tosto per appestare la città che mostrar segno d'amorevolezza. Di nuovo s'è tornato a trattare il matrimonio tra il Marchese di Massa et la figliola di Agostino Lomellini, la quale havrà di dote 150/m scudi. Questo signore alla prima acq.a che verrà se n'anderà al Poggio, dove dicono che stara tre mesi, et già la Bianca ha mandato a mettere in ordine il suo Palazzo che ha quivi vicino. Non mi occorendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bacio le mani, pregandoli dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le desseriamo.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 17 August 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Il signor Duca [Francesco], il quale hebbe un poco di male come scrissi a Vostra Altezza per l'ordinario passato, è di già sanato et appunto hoggi se n'è ito a Pratolino. Don Cosimo figliolo del Don Pietro è in termine, per quello che mi ha detto la signora Duchessa [Giovanna] stamane, che non giungerà a sera; non ho potuto havere altra comodità di parlare con sua Altezza che di baciarle le mani in nome suo, per essere in cocchio con la Contessa di Bagno et altre sue Dame. Mi è stato risposto da detta signora che non ha nessuno in Italia in cui confidi piu che in lei, et cosi ho detto che ho commissione da Vostra Altezza di obedirla come la sua propria persona. Lei mi ha risposto che bacia le mani di Vostra Altezza in nome suo et che le faccia fede che desidera di farle servitio Mi ha dimandato se la signora Leonora Cibò mi ha parlato di un suo negotio et io gli ho detto che si et lei mi ha risposto che parlerà con più comodità con me. Mi ha dimandato poi della signora Duchessa d'Urbino [Lucrezia d'Este] et m'ha comandato ch'io scriva a Vostra Altezza in nome suo che non la lasci piu andare nelle mani del marito, perchè simili genti quando pigliano in odio una persona fanno che molti peccati veniali, per piccioli che siano, diventano mortali, et mi ha soggiunto che beati sono quelli che possono fare come ha fatto lei, cioe andare a casa sua ad ogni loro requisitione et mi ha detto ancora che vi bacia le mani a Vostra Eccellenza in nome suo et che le faccia fede che l'estima come meritano le sue rare qualità se ben non le ha mai scritto. Ne voglio anche restare di dirle che detta signora l'ha nominata stamane una volta per Altezza non havendo [?] piu nominato ne di Altezza ne di altro, si che a me pare che ella mostri una bonissima volonta. Qui si dice che il Papa [Gregory XIII] ha sentito et sente molto male il caso di quelle due signore morte et che ha havuto a dire che le pare molto strano che un Principe che fa professione di Christiano di cattolico habbia voluto far perdere l'anima et il corpo a due simili signore. Dicono anche che l'Ambasciatore di Spagna ha parlato molto alteramente contro di questi signori con dire che se non ha altri termini di offendere i spagnuoli per la mala volontà che loro porta, che questo non è stato molto bello ne degno di Principe a far ammazzare una giovine cosi qualificata et forse innocente. Si dice anche qui che Sua Santità ha mandato un Breve monitorio a questo signore nel quale l'essorta a lasciare la Bianca, dicendogli che un Principe christiano et Cattolico non deve tenere una putana pubblicamente a sua posta et massime in questo tempo nel quale i Luterani pigliono cosi volentieri occasione di ragionare, ma questo credo che pochi o quasi nessuno lo possi sapere di certo. Il

Secretario Vinta si parti ancor lui, per quel che dicono, per la Corte dell'Imperatore, dopo la partita del Prencistano, et dicono pure che tutto è per havere Pirino Ridolfi nelle mani. Il Re Cattolico, per quel che ho veduto per lettere di Genova del secretario del Principe di Massa, ha levato affatto la speranza a Genovesi di rendere li denari, a tal che si trovano in malissimo termine. Ne havendo per hora altro a Vostra Altezza Humilissimamente Bacio le mani, pregandole dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le desseriamo.

Di Firenze gli xvii d'Agosto M.D.Lxxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 1 September 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Mercori passato visitai la signora Duchessa [Giovanna] et le baciai le mani in nome di Vostra Altezza et di nuovo le replicai come io havea commissione da lei di servirla come la sua persona istessa. [?] mi comandò che io ringratiassi infinitamente Vostra Altezza con molte affettuose parole et mi disse che desidera occasione una volta di haverla a servire. Incominciai poi a farle l'ambasciata che mi comandò Vostra Altezza ma sopravvenne il Conte Polidoro et mi si pose di dietro alla sedia di maniera che mi convenne mutar ragionamento con molto dispiacere mio et credo anche di Sua Altezza. La Signora Leonora Cibò l'ha mandata ad invitare che vada un giorno alle Murate et credo ch'ella vi andera, potrebbe essere che mi vi ritrovassi anch'io et che le potesse ragionarle alla lunga con sua commodità. So ben dire io a Vostra Altezza che la povera signora si ritrova ogni giorno più mal contenta et credo ch'ella non desidera altro che di potersene tornare a casa sua, perche questo signore [Francesco] va continuando secondo il suo uso più che mai dietro l'amore della Bianca, et per conseguenza in far mala compagnia a Sua Altezza et io ne potrei esser se [?] testimonio in tutte le occasioni per quello che si vede esteriormente et di quell'anche che detta signora ha conferito con la signora Leonora dell'intrinseco. Qui si dice che questo signore andera pur a Pisa al fine d'ottobre quando si partira dal Poggio, et quivi stara quattro o cinque mesi per essere vicino alla fabrica di Livorno, et questo me l'ha detto il Fiscale, come per certo ha comandato Sua Eccellenza che i forzati che sono restati fuori delle galere siano mandati a Livorno a lavorare. Hanno dato in governo alla Signora Duchessa i figlioli della Signora Donna Isabella et si va dicendo che il signor Paolo [Orsino] non li vuole, tenendo per fermo che non siano suoi figlioli, però di questo non ne so dare altra certezza a Vostra Altezza se non quanto si dice per il vulgo. Si vanno tuttavia vendendo le robbe della signora Donna Isabella et la Bianca ha comprato una gran parte delle biancherie et altre cose. Il signor Duca ha pigliato le gioie di detta signora et si è obligato di pagare tanti debiti quanto importerà l'estima loro. Il signor Paolo sene sta continuamente a Baroncelli a quel bel luogo che era della signora Donna Isabella, facendo una vita heroica[?] con quattro o cinque puttane continuamente, le quali vanno et tornano pubblicamente su la sua carrozza, et per dirla insomma, quivi si fa un [?] di tutti i generi di porcherie. Hieri detto signor Paolo venne a Fiorenza et mi pregò ch'io basciassi le mani a Vostra Altezza in nome suo et che glielo raccomandassi per affetionatissimo servitore; partirà a mezzo questo mese per Roma. Il signor Don Pietro

se ne sta hora in Fiorenza, essendo tornato di fuori, et ha invitato me ad andare a stare con Sua Eccellenza cinque o sei giorni a Caffaggiuolo, ma io non ne voglio fare altro perche quella aria genera catarrhi che ammazzano in un hora. Il Nuncio partì hieri per visitare Volterra et Pistoia secondo ha commissione di Sua Santità [Gregory XIII]. L'Ambasciatore di Lucca non è ancora tornato, ne tornera così tosto per l'indisposizione d'un suo figliuolo unico, il quale è stato vicino alla morte. Dui giorni dopo la morte di Roberto Ricci, morse anche Bernardo Strozzi huomo molto ricco, il quale era stato fatto da questo signore Commissario contro li banditi, et morse si dice di pettecchie occulte che non uscirono fuori; sono anche morti in questi giorni pur di pettecchie quattro fanciulli nell'hospitale delli Innocenti. Io sto con gli occhi aperti et vò cercando di intendere ogni minuccia per darne aviso a Vostra Altezza. Per una lettera dell'Ambasciatore di Lucca di 24 del passato, ho inteso che la saetta havea percosso in una torricella che è appresso al pallazzo dei Signori dove era certa polvere per il quotidiano uso, la quale è stata cagione di qualche rovina di certe case circonvicini et sono morti da dodeci huomini. Mi scrisse anche detto Ambasciatore che il Cavaliere Vercelli sta benissimo et è a Pescia et come giungano due galere di Sav.a andera ad imbarcarsi per Sav.a. Il Fiscali mi ha detto che qui si ha gran speranza di havere Pirino Ridolfi nelle mani ma molti credono anche che l'Imperatore [Maximilian II] non glielo vorrà dare. Questo signore attende continuamente al suo casino a lambicare et hora è intorno, per quel che ha detto a me, a far l'oro potabile, havendo finito quello che havea. Mi ha mostrato anche molti vasi di porcellana grandi che ha fatto con molto suo piacere, perche non sperava che questa sua porcellana dovesse riuscire in vasi grandi. Sua Eccellenza mi vede ogni giorno più volentieri per quello che mostra et mi fa ogni giorno più cortesie et più favori, come fa anche la signora Duchessa et il signor Don Pietro, ma con tutto ciò non voglio che mi mena fuori altrimenti. Si va pur tuttavia dicendo ch'egli pigliera per moglie la sorella del Duca di Urbino, ma però non vien creduto da molti perche è soggetto veramente nel quale non vi è ne huomo ne stato, però potrebbe anche forse essere, perche quelli che si tengono più savij delli altri, fanno anche alle volte maggior pazzie, come habbiamo veduto qui poco tempo fa, et a me pare che le pazzie siano concatenate insieme come sono le virtu, che l'una si tira dietro l'altra et qui si veggono tutto il dì li effetti. Fu trovato a questi giorni una testa in una saccozza, la quale era in una sporta in su la riva dell'Arno, et con tutto che fusse veduta da quasi tutta la città niuno non la puote mai conoscere; si crede che fusse uno che lavesse la taglia, che chi l'ammazzò dopo haver havuto il premio gettasse poi la testa in Arno. Ne mi

occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bacio le mani,
supplicandola a conservarmi in sua buona gracia da me sopra ogn'altra cosa desiderata.

Di Firenze il primo di settembre 1576.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 3 September 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Patron mio Colendissimo.

Sabato gionse Natale et io il medesimo giorno diedi la lettera a Sua Altezza [Giovanna] in propria mano che niuno mi vide, essendo ella venuta alla Nuntiata dove mi ritrovai anch'io et mentre che si cantava la compieta, essendoli io vicino et gli altri lontano, gliela diedi et anche hebbi comodità di dirli tutto quello che Vostra Altezza mi comanda con la sua, et detta signora resta tanto sodisfatta di Vostra Altezza che non si potria dire d'avantaggio et le bacia la mano del favore che le ha fatto in mandarli questa lettera fidatamente. Mi disse che risponderia in tutti i modi et quando io li dissi che l'Imperatore [Maximilian II] era per mandar qui un gentilhuomo, mi disse che non desiderava altro perche voleva far sapere a Sua Maestà tutti li mali trattamenti che le sono stati fatti qui et che le vengono fatti continuamente. Mi disse poi che io la dovessi aspettare il giorno seguente su la mia porta perche passerebbe di qui et che io mi accompagnarei con lei et che mi parlerebbe alla lunga, ma piove tanto che non credo che uscisse di casa. Non mancherò di stare avertito per intender quello che succederà di mano in mano e gliene darò raguaglio. Mi venne apunto l'occasione hiermattina, essendo con questo signore [Francesco] a uccellare a ragna a Pitti, di dirgli quello che mi comanda Vostra Altezza di quel suo gentilhuomo che ha da passare per di qui, onde mi rispose con molta cortesia et con gratissima ciera che tutti li suoi che capiteriano qui veneriano in casa di Vostra Altezza et sariano sempre molto ben visti et accarezzati. Mi parve anche bene di dirli perche causa era venuto il Corriero di Vostra Altezza, perche so che l'havrebbe inteso in ogni modo, onde gli dissi che era venuto per della China per la signora Duchessa d'Urbino sua sorella; subito Sua Eccellenza mi rispose che havra fatica a ritrovarne et che sarebbe anche molto vecchia et che credeva di haverne lui un poco assai fresca et che me la manderebbe, et cosi me n'ha mandato questa mattina tredici onche[oncie?], la quale sarà daperse, et da per se sarà anche una libra che mi ha trovata con grandissima fatica quell'amico del signor Canigiani. Si fa tuttavia il disegno delle Ragne per mandare a Vostra Altezza ma qui mi dicono che sarebbe anche bene a mandare un'huomo che le piantasse, perche d'altra maniera la cosa riuscirà difficilmente. Manderò anche al fine di questo Mese gli Arbori, cioè quello di limoncelli dolci et quello di Gaetta et anco quello di Gelsomini, et le manderò anche l'ordine che si ha da tenere in governarli, come mi ha insegnato il signor Duca. Sua Eccellenza mi ha comandato che io faccia opera ch'egli habbia quanto prima un qualche pezzo di certi muschi che faceva un certo Camillo che stava con Vostra Altezza ,ch'è gia morto per

quello che egli mi ha detto, però se paresse a Vostra Altezza di mandargliene un poco so che l'havrebbe molto cara. Havrei espedito Natale subito ch'io hebbi parlato a Sua Altezza se non fosse stato per aspettar la china. Non voglio anche restar di dirle che questo signore ragionando con lui mi disse che metteva all'ordine per far un parco da Fagiani et che havea ordinato che ne fossero pigliati, et perche so io che non ve ne sono molti in questi parti, mi è parso di farne moto a Vostra Altezza, credendo che ella gliene mandassa qualch'una di Femine, che sua eccellenza le havrebbe molto cari. Io subito che hebbi letta la lettera l'abbruciai come mi comanda Vostra Altezza. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bacio le mani, pregandoli dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le desseriamo. Di Firenze gli 3 di Settembre 1576.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 12 September 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo Signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

La signora Duchessa [Giovanna] mi diede sabbato la lettera in risposta di quella della Maestà dell'Imperatore et me la diede di nascosto entrando nella capella della Nuntiata, che havendola io per la mano me la porse sotto la cappa ne credo che nissuno se ne avedesse, mi disse poi che si piglierebbe commodità di ragionar con me due hore che ne havea molto bisogno. Il medesimo giorno dopo mangiare, Sua Altezza andò alle Murate et disse alla signora Leonora [Eleonora Cibo] che mi dicesse che io l'havessi per iscusata se non mi havea detto che io ringratiassi Vostra Altezza in nome suo perche non ne havea havuto commodità, ma che mi pregava ch'io la ringratiassi con ogni affetto et che havea ben volontà di scriverle, ma che non lo volea far fin tanto che non lo poteva trattar con i suoi titoli come si conviene, del che sperava molto presto. Disse anche a detta signora che dovesse ringratiar me et che mi facesse fede che voleva in ogni modo che la Maestà dell'Imperatore [Maximilian II] mi conoscesse per servitore et il Re Catolico [Philip II] ancora. Le disse poi il contenuto della lettera dell'Imperatore, il quale è questo che il mezo che ella havea trovato per farle sapere le cose sue era molto buono et che con Vostra Altezza ella dovesse pur conferire ogni cosa per che sene potea fidar sicuramente et che anche Sua Maestà le credeva molto bene il tutto et ch'egli era parecchiato sempre con gli Arciduchi suoi fratelli a spender sempre ogni cosa per suo servitio. Et disse che non voleva entrar più inanzi per che se per accidente alcuno la lettera andasse sinistra che non si havesse potuto intendere altro, ma che le manderia un gentilhuomo molto presto col quale ella poteva conferir ogni cosa confidentemente. Disse poi anche la detta signora alla signora Leonora che ella voleva dar conto al Re cattolico dei mali trattamenti che le vengono fatti qui, essendo che Sua Maestà le ha scritto molte volte et fattole molte offerte. Non lasciò anche di dirle che voleva dire al gentilhuomo dell'Imperatore che questo signore, per causa della Bianca, una volta fra l'altre le corse adosso et le mise le mani alla gola et con altra pose la mano su il pugnale, minacciandola di darle et lei le disse che guardasse come faceva perche ella havea dei parenti che la vendicheriano et lui le rispose che i suoi parenti haveano molto più bisogno di lui che non haveva lui di loro. Si lasciò anche intendere detta signora che quando questo signore vuole andare da lei non vuole mai che nessuna delle sue dame lo sappia et che crede che lo faccia perche non vada all'orecchie della Bianca, havendo inteso che lui le ha detto che non haverà mai a fare con altra donna che con lei, opur perche trovandola una volta gravida possa negar di essere stato con lei, et farle qualche

brutto scherzo, di maniera che la povera signora pensa sempre a qualche male di questo signore et vorrebbe ad ogni modo poterselo levare dinanti. Ha anche detto detta signora che vuol far saper all'Imperatore il poco conto che tengono qui di Sua Maestà et che vuole anche far sapere al signor Don Giovanni in che concetto lo tengono. Sua Altezza ha pur risposto all'Imperatore, per la lettera ch'io mandi a Vostra Altezza qui inclusa, la quale ella desidera che vada quanto prima, che havendole a mandar un gentil'huomo che Sua Maestà le mandi un'huomo accorto et sensato, acciò che lo possa molto bene instruire di ogni cosa, et gli dice che Sua Maestà si fidi pure di Vostra Altezza come fa ancora lei di tutte le cose, perche è bonissimo mezo et molto affettionato a tutta la casa sua. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente bacio le mani, pregandoli dal signor Iddio quella felicità et accressimento di stato che noi altri suoi veri et devotissimi servitori le desseriamo.

Di Firenze gli xii di settembre M.D.Lxxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 8 December 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Parlai al GranDuca [Francesco] come mi comanda Vostra Altezza con l'ultima sua della cosa del Tasso. Sua Eccellenza mi rispose che non si poteva stampare cosa nel suo Stato senon a Fiorenza, et senza licenza del Cavaliere Concino al quale bisogna denontiare ogni cosa, ma che per servire Vostra Altezza farebbe una buona provisione. Mandò subito il Concino vecchio a comandare a tutti i Stampatori che se gli capitasse tal cosa alle mani che la dovessero portare a lei et non stamparla in nessuna maniera sotto pena della Forca, et se l'havessero per sorte stampata che la dovessero medemamente rendere, et se sapevano se ciò fusse in Fiorenza o nel stato che lo dovessero rivelare sotto la medesima pena, et fece scrivere anco a Siena dove è un poco di stampa facendole la medesima prohibitione. Sua Eccellenza mi disse che lui se ne ritrova tre Canti de quali non si ha a dubitare punto. Il Cavaliere Salviati prima che andasse in Francia ancor lui me ne fece vedere circa due Canti. Messer Giovan Battista Detti mi ha detto ch'egli medemamente se ne ritruova due Canti, di maniera che mi pare che il Tasso sia stato troppo liberale in mandare in volta questa sua cosa a mio giudicio. Parlai anche con sua eccellenza della cosa del Comune di Vaglio la quale mi rispose molto gratamente che non voleva in nissuna maniera che s'invocasse discordia alcuna et mi comandò ch'io ne dessi un Memoriale al Concino, il che feci et glielo raccomandai caldamente. Gliel'ho poi tornato a racordare et procurato che sia liberato quello Orsetto che si truova prigionie a Pietrasanta; mi ha risposto ch'io lasci fare a lui che a tutto ciò si pigliera bonissimo espediente; mi disse che il signor Canigiani n'havea ancor lui scritto a Sua Eccellenza, mi disse anche intorno a questo particolare che desiderava che i suoi sudditi fossero in pace con tutti li vicini ma in particolare con quelli di Vostra Altezza alla quale egli desidera servire infinitamente. L'Ambasciatore di Lucca scrisse ancor lui subito a suoi signori per la cosa del Tasso et mi ha detto che crede certo che essi manderanno un bando conforme alla informatione che gli diedi io, poiche l'assicura che essi suoi signori farebbono cosa grata a Vostra Altezza. Ne scrissi anche al signor Principe di Massa, non ne ho ancor havuto risposta non essendo venuto a quest'hora il Procaccio dopo che io gli scrissi, ma sono ben sicuro che detto signore non mancherà d'adoperarsi in questo caldissimamente come son certo che farà sempre in tutte le cose che egli sapra che sia servitio di Vostra Altezza, facendo professione di esserli tanto affetionato servitore quanto fa. L'altra mattina io hebbi comodità andando a spasso a cavallo col GranDuca mentre aspettava l'hora della Messa di farmi cadere in proposito

di ragionargli di Taddeo di Landi, raccontandogli quanto era scelerato, et poi gli dissi ch'io mi credeva che si farebbe cosa gratissima a Vostra Altezza chi poteva a darglielo nelle mani insieme con quegli altri che sono fuggiti con lui, et gli soggiunsi anche che io mi confidavo che quando sua eccellenza gli havesse nello Stato suo che non gli assicurerebbe, essendo tanto scelerati quanto sono. Lui mi rispose che poi ch'io l'assicuravo che si farebbe cosa grata a Vostra Altezza che io stessi di buon'animo, che se vi capitassero mai il non solamente non gli assicurerebbe ma che glieli darebbe subito nelle mani, et mi soggiunse che io stessi avvertito se capitassero in alcun luogo del suo stato, che glielo faccia sapere che subito li mandera legati a Vostra Altezza. Questo ufficio lo feci come da me, non mostrando anche di saper da Vostra Altezza che fossero fuggiti. Qui poi habbiamo di nuovo come havrà inteso Vostra Altezza che fu pur vero che il signor Don Giovanni passò in Fiandra con quattro poste sconosciuto, fingendo di esser servitore del signor Ottavio Gonzaga, et questa nuova mi dette il GranDuca subito che passorno quei corrieri che venivano di spagna la qual nuova era scritta da Lucca, ma sua eccellenza non volse crederlo sinche non hebbe l'aviso lui. Mi disse anche sua eccellenza che la Maestà del Re cattolico [Philip II] si havea da trovare a Nostra Signora di Guardalupo dove si credea che si havesse anche il Re di Portogallo [Sebastian I], et che credea che questo abboccamento fosse per causa di certe Isole, ma si è inteso poi che la causa è per concludere matrimonio fra la figliuola [Isabella Clara Eugenia] di Sua Maestà Cattolica con esso Re di Portogallo, cosa assai inaspettata essendosi sempre creduto ch'ella dovesse essere dell'Imperatore nuovo [Rudolf II], et hora pare che si dica che Sua Maestà piglierà una figliuola del Duca di Sassonia. Si ha anco avviso, ma non so però se sia vero, che il signor Don Giovanni gionse a Lucemburg con lettere di cambio di 400/m scudi et che a Genova son comparso nove Galere con un Milione et quattrocento mila scudi per procedere in Fiandra. È anche stato scritto da Parigi che il figlio del Conte d'Agemonti era entrato in Anversa con 29 insegne et che li spagnuoli della fortezza uscirono fuori con gli Alemanni che vi erano, et mentre che gli Nimici si univano co'l Popolo ne amazzorno da otto o dieci mila di loro, et che di poi questo fatto ci arrivasse il Prencipe di Oranges con numero di genti, ma questo particolare pare che non si creda in nessuna maniera. Qui aspettiamo di fare un bel Carnesciale per le nozze della Bianca [of Bianca's daughter Pellegrina to Ulisce Bentivoglio] et il GranDuca mostra di haverne gran volontà, havendo detto a me che non sa che importi all'Imperatore poiche è morto ne alla casa sua che gli altri si diano un poco di piacere. La GranDuchessa sta tuttavia di mala voglia et ha fatto sapere tutti i mali trattamenti che

le vengono fatti a quello Ambasciatore che fu qui l'altro giorno dell'Imperatore, per quello che Sua Altezza ha detto a me, et mi disse che nel ritorno che egli faceva da Roma per andare a Genova ch'ella voleva soggiongergli delle altre cose, et dirgli liberamente che dubitava di veneno, et io le risposi che Sua Altezza non dovea temere di questo non havendogliene mai dato causa alcuna. Lei mi replicò che sapeva certo di non havere a morire d'altra morte per l'odio solamente che le porta questo GranDuca per rispetto della Bianca, mi disse anche di più che quando havria comodità voleva scrivere una lettera a Vostra Altezza poiche io l'assicurava ch'intendeva molto bene la lingua Tedesca, tenendola per quel caro cognato et parente che gli è. Il Galeone del GranDuca che viene di Spagna è gionto a Livorno, et fra molte cose che porta, porta di molti mobili del signor Vespasiano Gonzaga, per la qual cosa si è conieturato che torni in Italia. Il signor Prencipe di Massa con la sua ultima lettera mi scrive che io supplichi Vostra Altezza in nome suo che gli voglia far gratia di qualche rimedio contra la Peste, come saria a dire un Bussolletto di Tiriaca et un poco del suo oglio, onde se Vostra Altezza gli vorra far questo favore potrà commettere che sia inviato a me, che glielo manderò subito a Genova. Il Conte Sansegoondo è partito, et mi ha visitato con molta cortesia et io ho visitato lui; si dice che ha procurato con questo GranDuca che sia levato il bando al signor Ferrante di Rossi, suo cugino, ma non si sa certo ne si sa quello che habbia ottenuto. Il signor Piro Malvezzi è ritornato da roma et si truova qui, et è stato visitato dal Nontio et dall'Ambasciatore di Lucca, et sono stati loro i primi con molto poco loro decoro. Lui non ha visitato me, ne io Lui, non parendomi giusto di esser io il primo ancorche quegli altri siano stati essi i primi. Il Guarino procura di accomodare una sua figliola per Dama con questa GranDuchessa, col mezzo del Nontio et del Conte di Nuvolaro, et ancorche io creda che il tutto faccia con saputa di Vostra Altezza non ho però voluto mancare io di avisarnela. Ne mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bacio le mani, pregandoli da nostro signore Iddio quella grandezza et accressimento di stato che io suo devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore le dessidero. Di Firenze gli viii di xbre 1576.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Letter dated 25 November 1576: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Feci l'offitio di condoglianza con il GranDuca [Francesco] del modo che Vostra Altezza mi fece comandare. Mi fu risposto molto gratamente da sua eccellenza et mi disse ch'io dovessi ringraziare Vostra Altezza in nome suo di cosi amorevole uffitio che sapeva che ancor lei havrebbe sentito molto dolore havendo perso un cognato et un signore di tala importanza, ne piu si estese in questo ragionamento ma mi menò in un'altra camera del Casino a veder fondere del ramo et mi disse che credeva di haver ritrovato una Minera a Santo Gemignano tanto grande che non havrea piu bisogno di mandar fuori per esso, et mi andò poi trattenendo un pezzo, ragionandomi delle cose sue et raccontandomi con grandissimo suo gusto delle burle che ha fatto Vostra Altezza a Morgante. Io fui poi a fare l'ufficio con la Gran Duchessa [Giovanna] di quella maniera che ella mi fece comandare, dalla quale fui molto ben visto et accarezzato, et mi comandò che io dovessi ringraziare Vostra Altezza in nome suo, et che io l'assicurassi che non ha parente che ami più di lei et nel quale più confida et poi fece appressare la mia sedia alla sua, et cominciò a parlarmi piano essendo le sue dame assai lontano, dandomi conto dei mali portamenti che continua tuttavia questo signore di usare et del poco conto ch'egli ha fatto della morte dell'Imperatore suo fratello al quale lui per ragione dovea haver tanto obbligo, et in questo particolare mi disse che non gli havevano pur voluto coprire una lettica ne un cocchio di nero, et che le bisognava andare in una lettica coperta di verde, et che le sue figlioule in [?] dell'Imperatore erano ancora vestite di rosso, et mi disse che sua eccellenza le havea fatto una gran reprehensione perche portava lei et faceva portare alle sue Dame i veli neri, dicendole che faceva troppo gran duolo, et che non le restava a far più se morisse lui. Mi disse poi che havea havuto questa consolatione nella morte del fratello che gli Arciduchi Carlo et Ferdinando le haveano scritto che non si dubitasse che loro l'havrano sempre favorita et difesa in tutte le sue occorrenze, et mi disse anche che già la Maestà di suo nipote [Rudolf II] havea sappiuto come ella viene trattata qui, et che ne sperava un giorno qualche buon successo. Mi disse anche che il GranDuca era per andare a Livorno, et ch'havea procurato d'andarvi anco lei, credendo certo che, si la vi si fusse ritrovata al pallagio del signor Don Giovanni, che detto signore la sarebbe andato a visitare et gli havrebbe potuto parlare, ma non vi essendo lei[?] sapeva certo che Sua Altezza non toccherebbe niente del paese di questo signore essendo pieno dice lei di mala satisfatione fino alla golla, ma che però gli vuol scrivere in tutti i modi perche si confida molto in lui, havendole fatto detto signore sempre et a

bocca et per lettere molte offerte. Mi disse poi ch'io andassi un poco più spesso da lei et che non volea che l'andarvi cosi di rado desse qualche sospetto, et pigliava grande consolatione per dire, come disse lei, quando mi vedea, non havendo in questi paesi servitore di che ella si confidasse se non me. Mi disse poi anche ch'era pentita di non havere lasciato fare al GranDuca ciò che havea disegnato perche havea concluso Sua Eccellenza di tener occulta la morte dell'Imperatore fin fatta le nozze della Bianca et che per parole si è finalmente contentata di tardarli fin fatto Natale, et dice che ne è pentita tanto quanto di cosa che habbia mai fatto, perche havrebbe voluto che i suoi parenti havessero conosciuto quanto poco conto egli faccia di loro. I signori Lucchesi hanno eletto due Ambasciatori per mandare al signor Don Giovanni, uno che si chiama Messer Castruccio Castrucci Dottore et huomo d'età, et l'altro Messer Cesare de Nobili assai giovane. Scrissi a giorni passati a Vostra Altezza che si dicea che manderiano il signor Prospero Colonna alla [?] dell'Imperatore ma per quello che si è poi veduto si sono consigliati et hanno mandato in molta fretta a chiamare il Marchese Tomaso Malaspina quale era a suoi luoghi, et l'hanno spedito a Sua Maestà per condolarsi et rallegrarsi, et domattina, per quello che lui ha detto a me, essendomi venuto a visitare con molta cortesia, partirà con otto Poste. Questo Signore poi in quanto al duolo non ha fatto vestire altri che li paggi et li staffieri et qualche Ufficiale di casa, ma non ha fatto vestire ne la guardia ne altri. Li paramenti da messa gli sono fatti di veluto morello frangiati d'oro, facendosegli prima di veluto cremisino et questa mattina è stato alla messa dove era anche la Bianca et hanno fatto l'amore al solito. Il Nuntio, il quale facea cosi il ritirato, è diventato finalmente ancor lui cortigiano di detta Bianca; questo credo che lo faccia per buscare con questo mezo se potrà un Vescovato. A me poi detta Bianca fa di molti favori, havendomi mandato a presentare parecchie volte, contuttoche io non l'habbia visitata oltre che due volte, et quando mi incontra mi fa sempre di molte offerte con dirmi che desidera infinitamente di farmi servitio, et mi ha anche detto che desidera che Vostra Altezza la tenga per serva come le è veramente. L'Ambasciatore di Lucca mi ha addimandato due o tre volte con grande istanza se io ho mai havuto risposta di quello ch'io scrissi a Vostra Altezza quando le mandai copia di quelle lettere et per quello che egli mi dice i suoi signori desiderano infinitamente che Vostra Altezza li tenga per servitori come le sono veramente. Mi ha pregato detto Ambasciatore in nome di sudetti suoi Signori ch'io non voglia mancare di far sempre buon ufficio con lei per loro, però la supplico, se cosi parrà a Vostra Altezza, a farmi dare qualche aviso intorno a detto negotio accioche non paia ch'io non habbia fatto detto offitio ch'io promisi di

fare. Mi ha anche detto che crede che detti suoi signori manderanno uno Ambasciatore a Vostra Altezza et mi ha dato aviso di uno che è morto in una villa fatta tra quelli di Vostra Altezza et suoi, ma non me l'ha sappiuta ben dire come la sta, et esso gentilhuomo ne mostra grandissimo dispiacere, facendo professione di essere molto servitore et lo mostra continuamente a me perche, con tutto ch'egli sia vecchio, prometto a Vostra Altezza che continuamente egli vuol venire a levarmi di casa et ad accompagnarmici con tutta cortesia ch'io non saprei dire più, et mi fa tanto che non potria far più ad un suo padrone. Il signor Prospero Colonna non è ancor venuto, seben è un pezzo che si dice che viene di giorno in giorno. Il signor Mario Santafigiore è tornato un'altra volta al suo paese, non essendo stato qui un mese, et pare per quello che si dice che lui dopo la morte di quelle signore con le quali havea tanto tratenimento non sa più star qui. Mi è stato detto che il signor Cirio Alidosio ha detto che quando è stato hora alla Corte dell'Imperatore che ha havuto il luogo che desiderava, et che ha domandato, ma io non l'ho molto creduto conoscendo il Signor Cirio per un poco vaccante[?], pure ne ho voluto dar raguaglio a Vostra Altezza accioche sappia quello che si dice. La signora Leonora Cibò serva di Vostra Altezza et partialissima della Serenissima Casa sua al solito humilissimamente le bacia le mani et la supplica a servarla in gratia sua da lei sopra ogni altra cosa desiderata. Non mi occorrendo per hora dirle altro a Vostra Altezza humilissimamente Bacio le mani, pregandoli dal signor Iddio quella grandezza et accressimento di stato che io suo verissimo et devotissimo servitore le dessidero.

Di Firenze gli xxv di Novembre M.D.L.xxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Fascicolo 15 dated 1577:

Letter dated 1 June 1577: from Cortile to Alfonso (parts in code):

Serenissimo signore et Padron mio Colendissimo.

Mercori mattina gionse qua il Conte Ottavio che il GranDuca [Francesco] si trovava a Pratolino; hieri hebbe udienza da Sua Eccellenza et fu molto ben visto et accarezzato come intenderà minutamente Vostra Altezza da lui. Ho parlato a Sua Eccellenza della cosa degli huomini di Vaglio, com'ella mi comanda. Mi è stato risposto che havendo i suoi errato come potrebbe essere facilmente, essendovi gli animi di pessima natura, che ne farà tal dimostratione che farà conoscere quanto egli voglia che quei di Vostra Altezza siano rispettati da suoi. Il giorno medesimo che gionse il Conte Ottavio gionse anche il Comene mandato dal signor Don Alfonso, accompagnato dal figliolo del Coccapane, dal Morino et da messer Geronimo Galeazzi. Il giorno seguente arrivò il Colloreti mandato da Monsignor Illustrissimo d'Este, et in sua compagnia il Cusione mandato dal signor Don Francesco, havendomi gli loro signori scritto et mandatoli ancora loro a Casa mia. Ho dato le lettere dell'Arciduca che mi ha inviate Vostra Altezza alla Granduchessa [Giovanna] la quale mi ha comandato che io la ringratia infinitamente in nome suo, et che le faccia fede che se le ritruova molto obligata et molto desidera di farle servitio. Il Conte Cesare da [?] Ambasciatore del Duca d'Urbino hebbe udienza luni passato, et si parti Mercuri, et perche il Conte Ottavio partira di corto, per hora non le sarò più tedioso, aspettando per la venuta sua di dar conto a Vostra Altezza di quello che potrò intendere, alla quale humilissimamente bacio le mani.

Di Firenze il primo di Giugno 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Devotissimo et obligatissimo servitore,

Hercole Cortile.

Appendix 4

Guardaroba Data

Nota bene: the table below has been compiled from the following *Guardaroba Medicea* files: 61, 63, 64, 68, 69, 81, 89, 96, 98, 101. All abbreviations have been expanded and the data is arranged chronologically. The description given in the original *Guardaroba* record is transcribed in full and I have provided English translations of the main colour and material used, as well as a separate column which highlights items of mourning. To facilitate comparison English translations of the colours have been normalised (e.g. ‘chermisi’ and ‘rosso’ are both translated as ‘red’) and have been used to compile a chart detailing the colours present in Giovanna’s wardrobe. I have also provided two further colour charts for Eleonora de Toledo and Bianca Cappello. For Eleonora de Toledo’s clothing, I have used the *Guardaroba* data provided by Roberta Orsi Landini and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005), pp. 200-235. For Bianca Cappello’s clothing, I have used the *Guardaroba* data provided by Anna Elvira Tomasino, ‘Fasti granducali nella guardaroba di Bianca Cappello’, in *Apparir con stile*, ed. by Isabella Bigazzi (Florence: Edifir – Edizioni Firenze, 2007), pp. 86-90. I have restricted the data to key articles of clothing, including items such as gowns, petticoats and doublets, but excluding items such as cloaks and hats.

Guardaroba Data for Giovanna of Austria

Year	Month	Entry	Key Colour	Key Colour and Mourning	Key Material
1565	September	Una roba di domasco bianco guarnito con due bande di ricamo di canottiglio d'oro	white	white	damask
1565	September	Una roba di teletta d'argento con andari[?] di velluto rosso di chermisi a'rabeschi con una frangia a perle d'oro e d'argento	silver and red	silver and red	tabby
1565	September	Una sottana di teletta d'oro in seta verde a occhio di pavone guarnita con frangie d'argento e le maniche di teletta bianca ricamate	gold and green	gold and green	tabby
1565	September	Una sottana di raso incarnato, guarnita con una banda di ricamo d'oro in vello rosso	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	satin
1565	September	Una faldiglia di ermesino turchino con rivetti di velluto incarnato in bande	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1565	October	Una sottana di domasco giallo guarnita con raso giallo con trine d'oro e d'argento	yellow	yellow	damask
1565	October	Una veste per di sopra di velluto bianco tutto piccato foderato di taffetta bianco e mostre di raso simile con una banda di raso simile ricamato con canottiglio d'oro e guarnita di trina d'oro	white	white	velvet
1565	October	Una veste per di sopra di velluto rosso accollata e ricamata d'oro, argento e canottiglio, il busto e le maniche tutte piane e una balzana [founce] dabasso e davanti	red	red	velvet
1565	October	Una veste per di sopra di teletta d'argento con opera accollata et con strascico ricamata con fascia di ricamo d'oro filato in teletta d'argento che ven'entrò braccia 47 ¼ e di più pistagne n. 70	silver	silver	tabby
1565	December	Una sottana di teletta rossa arriciata in 0/3 riccio con pelo chermisi e soppannata di taffetta rosso	red	red	tabby

1565	December	Una roba di raso dorè tutta sfondata et sotto ermisino bianco soppannata d'ermellini e tutta ricamata da Niccolò ricamatore con oro e argento filato e razata	gold	gold	satin
1566	January	Una sottana di teletta d'argento guarnita con due bande di ricamo d'oro e d'argento in fascia di raso bigio	silver	silver	tabby
1566	January	Una roba di velluto bigio guarnita con una banda di ricamo d'oro e argento in fascia di raso bigio e soppannata di felpa bigia	grey	grey	velvet
1566	January	Una roba di velluto rosso di chermisi con due bande di ricamo di canottiglio e catenella d'oro ripiene di perle in su raso rosso attorno e sulle costure per tutto con guarnizione col medesimo ricamo e soppannata di raso chermisi, e alle bande vi è di piu guarnizione di merluzzi d'oro filato e tutta la banda del ricamo fu braccia 44 ½	red	red	velvet
1566	January	Una sottana di vellutato giallo a opera profilata e razata tutta con argento e le maniche di raso ricamate	yellow	yellow	vellutato
1566	February	Una sottana di velluto pagonazzo guarnita attorno con tre trine d'oro e d'argento e pieno il busto e le maniche soppannata di taffetta pagonazzo	purple	purple	velvet
1566	February	Una roba di velluto pagonazzo guarnita con tre trine d'oro e argento e suo collare pieno e soppannata di raso pagonazzo	purple	purple	velvet
1566	March	Una sottana di velluto verde tutta ricamata con oro e argento filato e soppannata di taffetta verde	green	green	velvet
1566	March	Una roba di velluto pagonazzo con due bande di raso simile tutte ricamate con perle, canottiglio e catenelle d'oro e argento	purple	purple	velvet
1566	March	Una sottana di velluto pagonazzo guarnita con tre bande di trina d'oro e argento e piene le maniche e busto soppannata di taffetta simile	purple	purple	velvet
1566	March	Una roba di velluto pagonazzo guarnita con due bande di trina doro e argento e pieno il collare e baragoni soppannata di raso pagonazzo	purple	purple	velvet

1566	April	Una roba di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1566	April	Un paio di maniche di teletta d'argento con opera sfondate e sotto raso bianco ricamate con oro e argento e seta e canottiglio (che pesarono oncie 12.9 per servire con la sottana di teletta d'argento con opera)	silver	silver	tabby
1566	April	Una roba di domasco rosso guarnito con passamano d'oro e seta rossa a perette ed a collo	red	red	damask
1566	May	Una roba di teletta d'argento con due bande di ricamo attorno et alle costure con i baragoni di detto ricamo attorno e dinnanzi e con un paio di maniche della medesima teletta tutte ricamate e fondate	silver	silver	tabby
1566	May	Una roba di dobletto incarnatino con oro tirato guarnita con due bande di ricamo di canottiglio d'oro e argento in raso rosso con merluzzi d'oro filato sulle bande soppanata di taffeta	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	cloth with a raised stripe
1566	May	Una sottana di raso rosso vergato d'oro filato e guarnito con due bande di ricamo in raso rosso fatto di canottiglio d'oro e d'argento con merluzzi d'oro filato alle bande con maniche di raso incarnato sfondate	red	red	satin
1566	June	Una sottana di ermisino giallo guarnita con tre trine d'oro e argento filato	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1566	June	Una roba di ermisino giallo guarnita come di sopra	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1566	June	Una roba di ermisino nero guarnita con spinette di seta nera	black	black	taffeta
1566	June	Una sottana d'ermisino bianco guarnita con dua bande sul medesimo e quattro spinette d'argento e seta pagonazza con busto accollato e le maniche del medesimo tutte piene	white	white	taffeta
1566	June	Una roba d'ermisino bianco con due bande sul medesimo e quattro spinette d'argento e seta pagonazza	white	white	taffeta

1566	June	Una sottana d’ermisino giallo guarnito con tre trine d’oro e d’argento che era quella si cavo’ d’un altra simile senza l’imbusto e maniche per Sua Altezza	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1566	June	Una roba d’ermisino giallo guarnita con tre trine d’oro e d’argento che era quella si cavo’ d’un’altra roba di simile ermisino per Sua Altezza	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1566	June	Una roba di dobletto d’oro e seta verde guarnito con ricamo d’oro e canottiglio d’oro e d’argento e oro filato in raso verde e guardata con frangia d’oro e d’argento a detto ricamo e soppanato d’ermisino bianco	gold and green	gold and green	cloth with a raised stripe
1566	June	Una sottana di dobletto d’oro e seta verde guarnito con ricamo di canottiglio d’oro e d’argento e oro filato e guardie con frangia d’oro e d’argento e soppanata d’ermisino bianco	gold and green	gold and green	cloth with a raised stripe
1566	June	Una roba di dobletto di seta rossa e oro tirato guarnita di ricamo d’oro in raso giuggiolino e guardata con frangette a tavolette rosse e oro e soppanata di taffeta rosso	red	red	cloth with a raised stripe
1566	June	Una sottana di raso rosso guarnito con ricamo di canottiglio in raso rosso guardato da due trine d’oro filato e argento a catena con maniche simile ricamate	red	red	satin
1566	July	Una sottana di domasco verde con busto accollato e tre trine d’oro e d’argento e due spinette d’oro e seta verde	green	green	damask
1566	July	Una roba di domasco verde guarnito con due trine d’oro e d’argento e tre spinette d’oro e seta verde con sue maniche	green	green	damask
1566	July	Una roba d’ermisino verde guarnita con due trine attorno d’oro e d’argento e tre spinette d’oro e seta verde con sue maniche	green	green	taffeta
1566	July	Una sottana d’ermisino verde guarnita con tre trine d’oro e d’argento e cinque spinette d’oro e seta verde	green	green	taffeta

1566	July	Una roba di ermisino rosso guarnita con listre del medesimo ermesino e sopravi trine d'oro tutto davanti e di dietro ed ai fianchi	red	red	taffeta
1566	July	Una roba di ermisino rosso semplice	red	red	taffeta
1566	July	Una roba di retino di napoli d'oro e d'argento soppanata di taffeta bianco guarnito con trine d'oro e d'argento	gold and silver	gold and silver	net
1566	July	Una sottana di retino di napoli d'oro e d'argento soppannato di taffeta bianco e guarnita con trine d'oro e d'argento	gold and silver	gold and silver	net
1566	October	Una sottana di teletta rossa e oro con opera con due bande di sfondato di teletta bianca in teletta rossa con profili d'argento accollata e con strascico che ven'entrò braccia 33 ¼ e traverse diciasette per le maniche	red	red	tabby
1566	October	Un paio di maniche di domasco pagonazzo guarnite con trine d'oro e d'argento e spinette d'oro	purple	purple	damask
1566	October	Una roba di raso chermisi [?] con trine d'oro e d'argento attorno e alle costure	red	red	satin
1565	November	Una sottana di domasco rosso guarnita di trine d'oro e di velluto rosso compassato con verghole d'oro e con frangette per guardia	red	red	damask
1567	April	Una sottana di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1567	April	Una roba di rascia nera stietta per il bruno;	black	mourning	wool twill
1567	June	Una roba di ermisino nero guarnita con spinetta di seta nera	black	black	taffeta
1567	June	Un paio di maniche di ermisino nero guarnite con spinette di seta	black	black	taffeta
1567	June	Una sottana di ermisino nero con suo busto e maniche guarnite con bande del medesimo ermisino e spinette nere di seta	black	black	taffeta
1567	July	Una sottana di ermisino bianco guarnita con listre del medesimo ermisino e sopravi trine d'oro et così albusto e maniche	white	white	taffeta
1567	July	Una roba di ermisino rosso guarnita come di sopra e davanti e di dietro ed ai fianchi;	red	red	taffeta

1567	August	Una roba di teletta d'argento con opera guarnita con ricamo in varie foggie fatte con canottiglio, frange e seta	silver	silver	tabby
1567	August	Una sottana simile con detto ricamo	silver	silver	tabby
1567	September	Una roba di grossa grana rossa guarnita con trine d'oro filato e sotto taffetta bianco sfrangiato	red	red	grosgrain
1567	September	Una sottana simile;	red	red	grosgrain
1567	September	Un paio di maniche di ermisino bianche pieno di trine d'oro	white	white	taffeta
1567	September	Una roba di raso rosso di chermisi guarnita con tre trine d'oro e tutto il busto e le maniche foderata di ermellini	red	red	satin
1567	September	Una roba di domasco verde chiusa dinanzi con le sue maniche orlata di passamano d'oro	green	green	damask
1567	October	Un paio di maniche di rete curato			net
1567	October	Un paio di maniche di rete			net
1567	December	Un paio di maniche di rete curato			net
1568	January	Una roba di velluto pagonazzo con opera e ricamata con una banda in raso pagonazzo con canottiglio e oro filato baragoni fianchi e di dietro e dinnanzi e soppanato di taffetta pagonazzo	purple	purple	velvet
1568	January	Una sottana di velluto pagonazzo con opera con due bande di ricamo fatto in raso pagonazzo, busto e maniche e soppannato col medesimo pagonazzo	purple	purple	velvet
1568	March	Una sottana di domasco bigio guarnita con bandoline in raso bigio ricamate con vergola d'oro filato e vergola d'oro e seta bigia e frangiolina a mezzi monti per guardia	grey	grey	damask
1568	March	Una roba simile ricamata nel medesimo modo	grey	grey	damask
1568	April	Una sottana di domasco bianco guarnita con tre bande di ricamo fatte in raso bianco	white	white	damask

1568	April	Una roba di domasco turchino guarnita con due bande di ricamo in raso turchino con le sua maniche ed alle costure	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1568	May	Una roba di ermisino nero guarnita con trine d'oro e d'argento	black	black	taffeta
1568	May	Una sottana di ermisino nero guarnita con trine d'argento con due paia di maniche	black	black	taffeta
1568	May	Una sottana di retino (d'oro) di napoli con suo busto e maniche guarnita con una passamano d'oro e d'argento attorno, e foderata di taffetta turchino	gold	gold	net
1568	May	Una roba di retino d'argento guarnito foderata di taffetta turchino	silver	silver	net
1568	June	Una roba di raso incarnatino guarnito con due bande di ricamo fatto in raso simile con oro e con argento	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	satin
1568	June	Una sottana di raso bianco guarnita con 3 bande di ricamo in raso bianco con oro	white	white	satin
1568	June	Una roba di retino d'argento guarnita con passamano d'oro e d'argento e soppanato di taffetta turchina	silver	silver	net
1568	June	Una sottana d'ermisino bianco con busto e maniche guarnito con passamano d'oro e d'argento	white	white	taffeta
1568	June	Una roba d'ermisino incarnatino guarnita con passamano d'oro e d'argento	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	taffeta
1568	September	Una sottana di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1568	September	Una roba di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1568	October	Una roba (in another file it's called a 'zimarra') di grossa grana nera foderata di golpe di rangia	black	black	grosgrain
1568	October	Una roba di rascia nera da coprire zebellini	black	mourning	wool twill
1568	November	Una roba di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1568	December	Una sottana di rascia nera foderata il busto di felpa	black	mourning	wool twill

1568		Un giubbone di raso giallo	yellow	yellow	yellow	satin
1568		Un Giubbone di raso bianco	white	white	white	satin
1569	January	Uno gamurrino di rovescio rosso	red	red	red	wool cloth
1569	April	Una sottana di raso bianco con busto e maniche guarnita con 3 bande di ricamo in raso bianco	white	white	white	satin
1569	April	Una roba di raso dorè guarnita di ricamo in raso dorè	gold	gold	gold	satin
1569	April	Una vesta di buratto d'oro tirato in seta rossa con busto e maniche guarnita di ricamo in raso incarnatino	gold	gold	gold	gauze
1569	April	Una sottana di raso bianco con busto basso guarnita di spinette d'argento e seta turchina	white	white	white	satin
1569	April	Una vesta di velluto verde senza guarnitione	green	green	green	velvet
1569	April	Una roba di teletta d'oro e d'argento riccio con pelo turchino e seta rossa foderata di taffeta bianco	gold and silver	gold and silver	gold and silver	tabby
1569	April	Una roba di velluto bianco guarnita con trine d'oro battuto	white	white	white	velvet
1569	May	Una roba di velluto incarnatino ricamata di frangietta d'argento foderata di taffeta bianco	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	velvet
1569	May	Una roba d'ermisino bianco orlata di passamano doro	white	white	white	taffeta
1569	May	Una roba d'ermisino giallo orlata di passamano d'argento con bottoni d'argento	yellow	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1569	May	Una roba d'ermisino rosso orlata di passamano doro	red	red	red	taffeta
1569	June	Una sottana d'ermisino bianco con busto e maniche guarnita di passamano d'oro	white	white	white	taffeta
1569	June	Una roba d'ermisino giallo orlata di passamano d'argento	yellow	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1569	June	Una sottana simile guarnita del medesimo	yellow	yellow	yellow	taffeta

1569	June	Una sottana d’ermisino bianco orlata di passamano d’oro vecchio senza busto	white	white	white	taffeta
1569	June	Una faldiglia d’ermisino giallo coribetti di velluto giuggiolino	yellow	yellow	yellow	taffeta
1569	June	Una sottana di retino di napoli d’oro e argento guarnita di passamano d’oro e argento foderata di taffeta bianco con suo busto maniche e astoni foderati d’ermesino bianco	gold and silver	gold and silver	gold and silver	net
1569	June	Una roba di retino simile guarnita come la sottana soppannata di taffeta bianco	gold and silver	gold and silver	gold and silver	net
1569	July	Una roba d’ermesino nero finita di spinette con sua astoni	black	black	black	taffeta
1569	July	Una sottana simile con suo busto e maniche et astoni finita come sopra	black	black	black	taffeta
1569	August	Una sottana di domasco bianco con suo busto senza maniche con 3 bande di ricamo fatte in raso bianco	white	white	white	damask
1569	August	Una roba di domasco turchino guarnita di trina d’oro e d’argento	turquoise	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1569	September	Una sottana di raso bianco con suo busto e maniche piccate guarnita con tre trine d’oro attorno	white	white	white	satin
1569	September	Una roba di domasco turchino che va foderata di vai con sue astoni e maniche da vestire guarnita di trina d’oro e argento	turquoise	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1569	September	Una roba di raso nero guarnita con trine d’argento e mostre d’ermesino bianco piccate	black	black	black	satin
1569	September	Una roba d’ermisino nero guarnita di passamano d’argento con sue astoni e maniche da vestire	black	black	black	taffeta
1569	September	Una roba di velluto nero guarnita di trina d’argento e seta nera con sue astoni e maniche	black	black	black	velvet
1569	October	Una roba di saia lucchesina guarnita di frangiolina d’argento con sue astoni e maniche da vestire	red	red	red	twill
1569	October	Una roba di raso dorè guarnita di trina d’argento e seta turchina	gold	gold	gold	satin

1569	November	Un busto di velluto chermisi guarnito di trine d'oro e argento	red	red	velvet
1570	January	Una roba di raso bianco guarnita di 3 trine d'oro e argento che va foderata d'ermellini con sue astoni e maniche da vestire	white	white	satin
1570	February	Una camiciola di seta dorè	gold	gold	silk
1570	April	Un giubbone di raso bianco guarnito di spinette doro	white	white	satin
1570	April	Un giubbone di teliglia			<i>teliglia</i>
1570	April	Un giubbone di teliglia			<i>teliglia</i>
1570	April	Una roba di raso verde foderata di taffetta bianco guarnita con una frangia vellutata d'oro e seta verde	green	green	satin
1570	May	Una sottana di ermisino bianco senza busto guarnita di 3 frangiette vellutate di seta turchina e oro	white	white	taffeta
1570	June	Una roba di ermisino bianco	white	white	taffeta
1570	June	Una sottana simile senza busto tutte guarnite di passamano d'oro	white	white	taffeta
1570	August	Una sottana di raso turchino senza busto guarnita di 3 trine d'argento e oro battuto	turquoise	turquoise	satin
1570	August	Una roba di dozetto[?] d'oro e argento stacciato in seta torta guarnita d'una trina d'argento e soppannata di taffetta	gold and silver	gold and silver	<i>dozetto</i>
1570	August	Una roba di raso turchino mavi tutta piccata e foderata di taffetta bianco guarnita dinnanzi e attorno e ai fianchi di trine d'oro e argento tirato	turquoise	turquoise	satin
1570	August	Una sottana senza busto di lama d'argento stacciato con oro filato soppannata di taffetta bianco guarnita d'un passamano attorno	silver	silver	<i>lama</i>
1570	August	Una sottana di raso colonbino senza busto guarnita di 2 trine d'oro e argento larghe	grey	grey	satin
1570	August	Una sottana di raso giallo simile guarnita di 2 trine d'argento larghe	yellow	yellow	satin

1570	August	Una sottana di velluto chermisi guarnita di 5 frangiette vellutate con oro	red	red	velvet
1570	August	Una roba di raso colonbino con sue astoni guarnita di 2 trine d'oro e argento soppannata di taffetta bianco	grey	grey	satin
1570	August	Una roba di velluto volta			velvet
1570	August	Una roba di tabi doro pagonazza [?] guarnita d'un ricamo di perle vecchio ch'era a un'altra veste	gold	gold	tabby
1570	August	Una sottana di tabi d'argento senza busto guarnita di 3 bande vecchie di canottiglio d'oro e seta	silver	silver	tabby
1570	August	Una sottana senza busto d'oro filato tirato e stacciato guarnita di passamano doro	gold	gold	
1570	August	Una roba di tabi d'argento senzonde soppannato di taffetta bianco guarnita d'un ricamo vecchio d'un canottiglio d'oro e argento e seta	silver	silver	tabby
1570	August	Una roba di velluto incarnatino guarnita di ricamo in raso incarnatino con canottiglio d'oro e argento soppannata di taffetta bianco	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	velvet
1570	August	Una sottana senza busto di raso incarnatino guarnita di 2 bande di ricamo di perle et canottiglio d'oro	pinkish-red	pinkish-red	satin
1570	August	Una sottana di velluto dorè guarnito di 2 bande di ricamo in raso dorè con canottiglio d'argento e argento filato e senza busto	gold	gold	velvet
1570	October	Una roba di dommasco turchino guarnito con 2 trine d'argento e foderata le mostre e astoni di taffetta bianco	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1570	October	Una sottana di dommasco simile guarnita di 3 trine d'argento	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1570	November	Una roba di domasco turchino guarnito di trina doro [?] che va foderata d'ermellini	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1571	February	Una roba d'ermisino nero guarnito d'una guarnitione vecchia d'argento	black	black	taffeta
1571	June	Un giubbone d'ermisi bianco guarnita di spinette doro	white	white	taffeta

1571	August	Una roba d'ermisi mavi guarnito con 2 trine d'oro attorno con una banda d'ermisi bianco per di drento[?] ed appiè	mauve	mauve	taffeta
1571	August	Una sottana simile senza busto guarnita come sopra	mauve	mauve	taffeta
1571	August	Un giubbone d'ermisi bianco guarnito con spinette d'oro	white	white	taffeta
1571	October	Una roba di raso dorè senza guarnizione che va foderata d'ermellini	gold	gold	satin
1571	December	Una sottana di velluto nero senza busto guarnita di trina d'argento	black	black	velvet
1571	December	Una roba di velluto nero che va foderato d'ermellini che non vi va altra guarnizione	black	black	velvet
1571	December	Un giubbone di velluto riccio			velvet
1571	December	Un giubbone di grossagrana			grosgrain
1572	March	Una roba di rascia nera semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	March	Una sottana di rascia nera semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	March	Un giubbone di rascia nera semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	June	Una roba di muchaiedo nero senza guarnizione	black	mourning	wool cloth
1572	June	Una sottana senza busto simile	black	mourning	wool cloth
1572	June	Un giubbone di muchaiedo simile	black	mourning	wool cloth
1572	July	Una roba di velo nero crespo con sue astoni soppannata d'ermisino	black	black	veil
1572	July	Una sottana di ferrandina senza busto soppannata d'ermisino			light cloth
1572	July	Un giubbone di ferrandina soppannata del medesimo			light cloth
1572	July	Una roba di rascia nera con mostre et bavero di velo;	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	July	Una sottana di rascia nera senza busto semplice;	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	July	Un giubbone di rascia nera soppannato di taffeta	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	July	Un giubbone di rascia nera soppannata di guarnello	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	November	Un giubbone di tela cremasca soppannato di guarnello nero			cloth

1572	November	Una roba di rascia nera senza guarnizione che va foderata di ermellini	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	November	Una sottana di rascia nera semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	November	Un giubbone di rascia nera soppannata di guarnello	black	mourning	wool twill
1572	December	Una roba di damasco giallo con sue maniche da vestire guarnito di nastro d'argento e bottonata di bottoni alla moresca con riscontri che va foderata di martore;	yellow	yellow	damask
1573	March	Una roba di rascia nera con mostre d'ermisino nero	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	March	Una sottana senza busto con ermisino allo strascico			
1573	March	Un giubbone di rascia nera soppannato d'ermisino nero	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	March	Una roba di cianbellotto di ponente bianca semplice	white	white	camlet
1573	March	Una sottana di mucaiirro simile bianca senza busto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	March	Una patientia di taffeta turchino	turquoise	turquoise	taffeta
1573	March	Un giubbone di cianbellotto di ponente bianco soppanato di tela di sangallo bianca	white	white	camlet
1573	April	Una roba di mucaiirro di ponente bianca semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Una roba di mucaiirro di ponente bianca semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Una sottana di mucaiirro simile senza busto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Una sottana di mucaiirro simile senza busto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Un giubbone di mucaiirro simile soppanato d'ermisi	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Un giubbone di mucaiirro simile	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Una faldiglia d'ermisi bianco	white	white	taffeta
1573	April	Una sottana di rovescio rosso senza busto	red	red	wool cloth
1573	April	Una sottana di mucaiirro di ponente bianco senza busto	white	white	wool cloth

1573	April	Una sottana di mucaiarmo di ponente bianco senza busto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Una roba di mucaiarmo di ponente bianco semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Una roba di mucaiarmo di ponente bianco semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Un giubbone simile	white	white	wool cloth
1573	April	Un giubbone simile	white	white	wool cloth
		Una roba di domasco pagonazzo con maniche da vestire guarnita di una trina d'argento con bottoni d'argento con riscontri e con mostre di taffetta bianco	purple	purple	damask
1573	April	Una roba di mucaiarmo di ponente bianco semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	May	Una sottana simile senza busto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	May	Uno giubbone simile	white	white	wool cloth
1573	June	Una roba di mucaiarmo bianco lunga semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	June	Una sottana simile	white	white	wool cloth
1573	June	Un giubbone di detto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	June	Una pacienza di taffetta turchino	turquoise	turquoise	taffeta
1573	July	Una roba di mucaiarmo bianco di ponente semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	July	Una sottana senza busto di detto	white	white	wool cloth
1573	July	Una pacientia di taffetta turchino	turquoise	turquoise	taffeta
1573	July	Un giubbone di mucaiarmo detto	turquoise	turquoise	wool cloth
1573	August	Una roba di mucaiarmo bianco di ponente semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	August	Una roba di mucaiarmo bianco di ponente semplice	white	white	wool cloth
1573	August	Una sottana detta	white	white	wool cloth
1573	August	Una sottana detta	white	white	wool cloth

1573	August	Una roba di raso bianco trincitata soppanata e guarnita dinnanzi di lama d'argento buono e foderata di taffetta bianco con guarnizione di due trine d'oro e d'argento filato con canottiglio d'oro a vernile[?]	white	white	satin
1573	August	Una sottana di dobretto bianco a listre senza busto tutta trinciata foderata di taffetta bianco [?] di lama detta guarnita di tre spinette d'oro e argento	white	white	cloth with a raised stripe
1573	August	Una sottana di muccaiardo bianco di ponente con suo busto sopanato di taffetta bianco	white	white	wool cloth
1573	September	Un giubbone di dobretto detto di sopra trinciato soppanato di la d'argento	white	white	cloth with a raised stripe
1573	September	Un giubbone di raso bianco tutto trinciato foderato di lama d'argento buono e soppanato di taffetta bianco guarnito di spinetta d'oro e d'argento con seta mavi	white	white	satin
1573	September	Un giubbone di dobretto d'oro e d'argento tirato et filato e stiacciato guarnito di passamano d'oro stretto foderato di taffetta bianco	gold and silver	gold and silver	cloth with a raised stripe
1573	September	Un gamurrino di saia rovescia bianca con suo busto et maniche da vestire soppanato di taffetta	white	white	twill
1573	September	Una pazienza di taffetta turchino	turquoise	turquoise	taffeta
1573	October	Una roba di domasco turchino con sue baragioni guarnita di ricamo in su raso turchino con due bande	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1573	October	Una sottana di domasco detto senza busto guarnita come è detto	turquoise	turquoise	damask
1573	October	Un giubbone di teliglia dimisa.o[?] con oro battuto guarnito di spinetta d'oro e seta mavi foderata di gna.llo[?] bianco peloso con abottonatura d'oro filato et seta mavi			<i>teliglia</i>
1573	October	Una roba semplice di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	October	Una sottana di detta	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	October	Un giubbone di detta	black	mourning	wool twill

1573	October	Una sottana di rascia nera senza busto semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	October	Una roba di detta	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	October	Un giubbone di detta	black	mourning	wool twill
1573	November	Una vesta corta di grossagrana nera alla francese con fodera di martore	black	black	grosgrain
1573	November	Una veste di domasco pagonazzo	purple	purple	damask
1573	November	Una veste di domasco pagonazzo	purple	purple	damask
1573	November	Una sottana di velluto bianco	white	white	velvet
1574	February	Una sottana di velluto bianco senza busto guarntia di passamano d'oro e foderata di taffetta bianco	white	white	velvet
1574	February	Una roba di raso maví con sue astoni tutta trinciata guarnita con due spinette d'oro e d'argento con seta maví foderata di lama d'argento buono e foderata di pelle di ermellini	mauve	mauve	satin
1574	February	Un giubbone di teliglia di milano con oro et seta maví guarnito di una spinetta detta di sopra con fodera di guarnello bianco e suoi bottoni d'oro e seta	gold and mauve	gold and mauve	<i>teliglia</i>
1574	March	Una roba di rascia nera semplice con sue astoni	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	March	Una sottana di rascia nera senza busto	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	March	Un giubbone di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	March	Un giubbone di rascia nera	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	April	Una roba di rascia nera semplice con sue baragioni	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	April	Una sottana di rascia detta semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	April	Un giubbone di rascia detta	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	April	Una roba di rascia nera semplice con sue baragioni	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	April	Una sottana di detta semplice	black	mourning	wool twill

1574	April	Un giubbone di detta semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	May	Una roba di buratto nero doppio semplice	black	black	gauze
1574	May	Una sottana di detto senza busto	black	black	gauze
1574	May	Una sottana di ermisino nero senza busto	black	black	taffeta
1574	May	Un giubbone di buratto nero	black	black	gauze
1574	May	Una zimmara di grossa grana nera	black	black	grosgrain
1574	June	Una roba di velo nero stucato increspato foderato di taffeta nero con sua maniche lunghe e larghe e strascico di braccia uno 0/2 e sue astoni	black	black	veil
1574	June	Una veste di teletta d'oro in seta incarnatina a opera	gold	gold	tabby
1574	June	Una roba di buratto nero doppio semplice	black	black	gauze
1574	June	Una sottana di detto simile	black	black	gauze
1574	June	Un giubbone di detto simile	black	black	gauze
1574	June	Una veste di teletta d'argento a opera di graniti	silver	silver	tabby
1574	July	Una veste di ferrandina di seta nera grande con sue maniche larghe sue astoni e strascico	black	black	light cloth
1574	July	Una roba di ferrandina simile un poco minore	black	black	light cloth
1574	July	Una roba grande semplice con sue astoni doppi			
1574	October	Una roba di ferrandina di seta nera con sue maniche e riscontri di bottoni di seta nera va foderata di martore	black	black	light cloth
1574	October	Una roba di ferrendina di seta nera con sue maniche e abottonatura di seta alla ungherescha foderata di vai	black	black	light cloth
1574	November	Una roba di rascia nera semplice inpicciata di basette nere	black	mourning	wool twill
1574	November	Una roba di drappo di filaticcio e seta nera inpicciata di conigli di spagnia	black	black	floss-silk

1575	January	Una roba di rascia nera con sue maniche da vestire e baragioni semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	January	Una sottana di rascia detto semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	January	Un giubbone di rascia detto	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	February	Una roba di rascia nera semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	February	Una sottana di detta simile	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	February	Un giubbone di detta	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	February	Una roba di rascia nera con sue baragioni	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	February	Una sottana di detta senza busto	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	February	Un giubbone di detta semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1575	April	Un giubbone di teliglia o drappo simile di seta bianca con oro filato e argento stiacciato soppanato di taffetta bianco con sua abottonatura d'oro filato	white	white	<i>teliglia</i>
1575	April	Un altro giubbone con argento filato e bottoni d'argento soppanato di taffetta detto			
1575	May	Una roba di velo nero stucato con sue astoni doppi soppanata di ermisino nero	black	black	veil
1575	May	Una sottana simile alla detta di sopra	black	black	veil
1575	May	Un giubbone simile	black	black	veil
1575	June	Una roba di raso giallo trinciata guarnita di dua trine d'argento con sue astoni e soppanata tutta di taffetta giallo	yellow	yellow	satin
1575	June	Un giubbone di raso bianco trinciato soppanato di taffetta bianco guarnito di biscietta d'oro filato	white	white	satin
1575	June	Una veste di ermisino bianco grande detto il sacco con sue maniche da vestire e astoni doppi guarnita di passamano d'oro e seta nera	white	white	taffeta

1575	June	Una roba di ermisino detto con astoni doppi et guarnizione simile di sopra	white	white	taffeta
1575	July	Una sottana di ermisino bianco guarnito di ricamo di ermisino bianco con canottiglio d'oro e oro filato con perle e margheritine largo 0/5 braccio	white	white	taffeta
1575	July	Un giubbone d'ermisino bianco foderato di taffeta bianco guarnito di passamano d'oro e seta nera	white	white	taffeta
1575	November	Una zimarra di velluto nero a opera di mandorlina con sue baragioni foderata di ermellini	black	black	velvet
1575	December	Un giubbone di raso rosso alla tedesca guarnito di frangia d'oro con suoi bottoni d'oro filato	red	red	satin
1576	February	Una sottana di velluto rosso chermisi con suo strascico senza busto tagliato piu va finita e guarnita di due bande di ricamo in su velluto rosso con nilucco d'oro filato et nilucco d'argento frangietta d'argento e altro che dinnanzi ne ha quattro bande	red	red	velvet
1576	November	Una roba di rascia nera semplice da bruno;	black	mourning	wool twill
1576	November	Una sottana di rascia detta	black	mourning	wool twill
1576	November	Una zimarra semplice con sue maniche	black	mourning	wool twill
1576	November	Una sottana semplice	black	mourning	wool twill
1576	November	Un giubbone semplice (<i>all rascia nera for the bruno dell'imperatore</i>)	black	mourning	wool twill
1576		Una veste di velluto rosso	red	red	velvet
1577	June	Una roba di ermisino nero con mostre di ermisino bianche guarnita di una spinetta d'argento e oro con sue baragioni	black	black	taffeta
1577	June	Una sottana di grossa grana bianca senza busto guarnita di dua spinette d'oro arricciate	white	white	grograin
1577	September	Una zimarra di tabí d'oro in seta pagonazza con sue astoni	gold	gold	tabby

1577	September	Una sottana di raso bianco vergato con oro senza busto	white	white	white	satin
1577	September	Un giubbone di raso bianco vergato con oro		white	white	satin

Chart of Guardaroba Colours for Giovanna of Austria

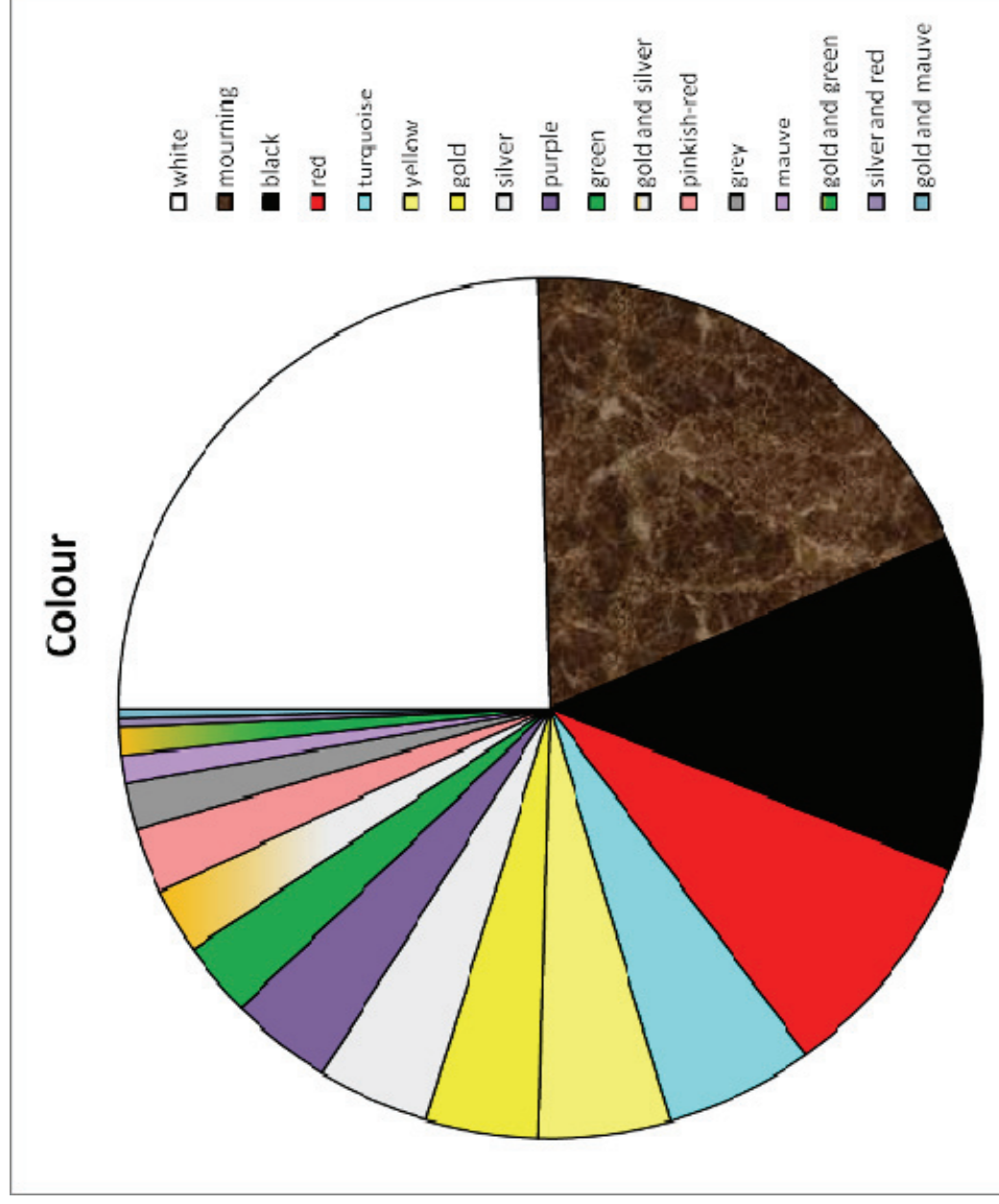


Chart of Guardaroba Colours for Eleonora de Toledo

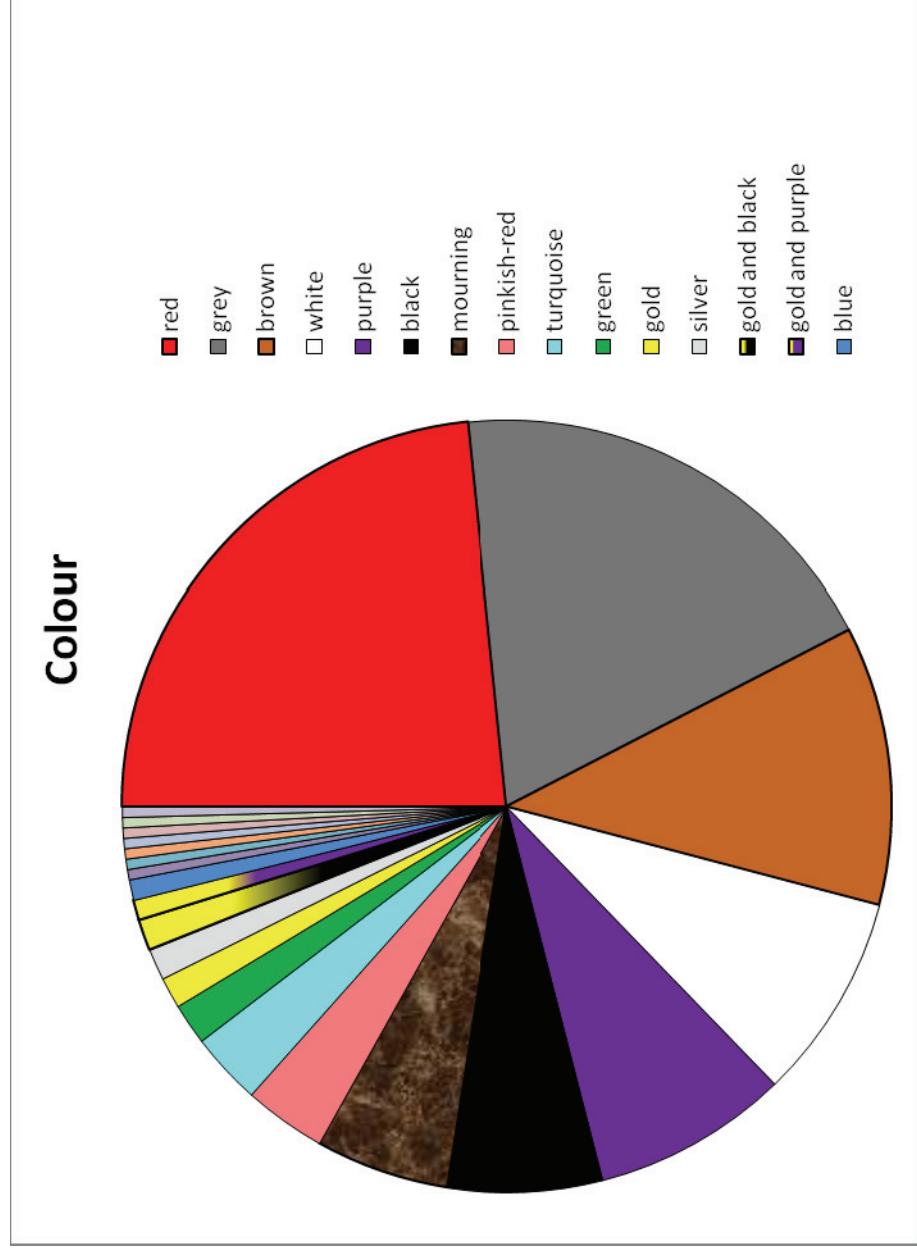
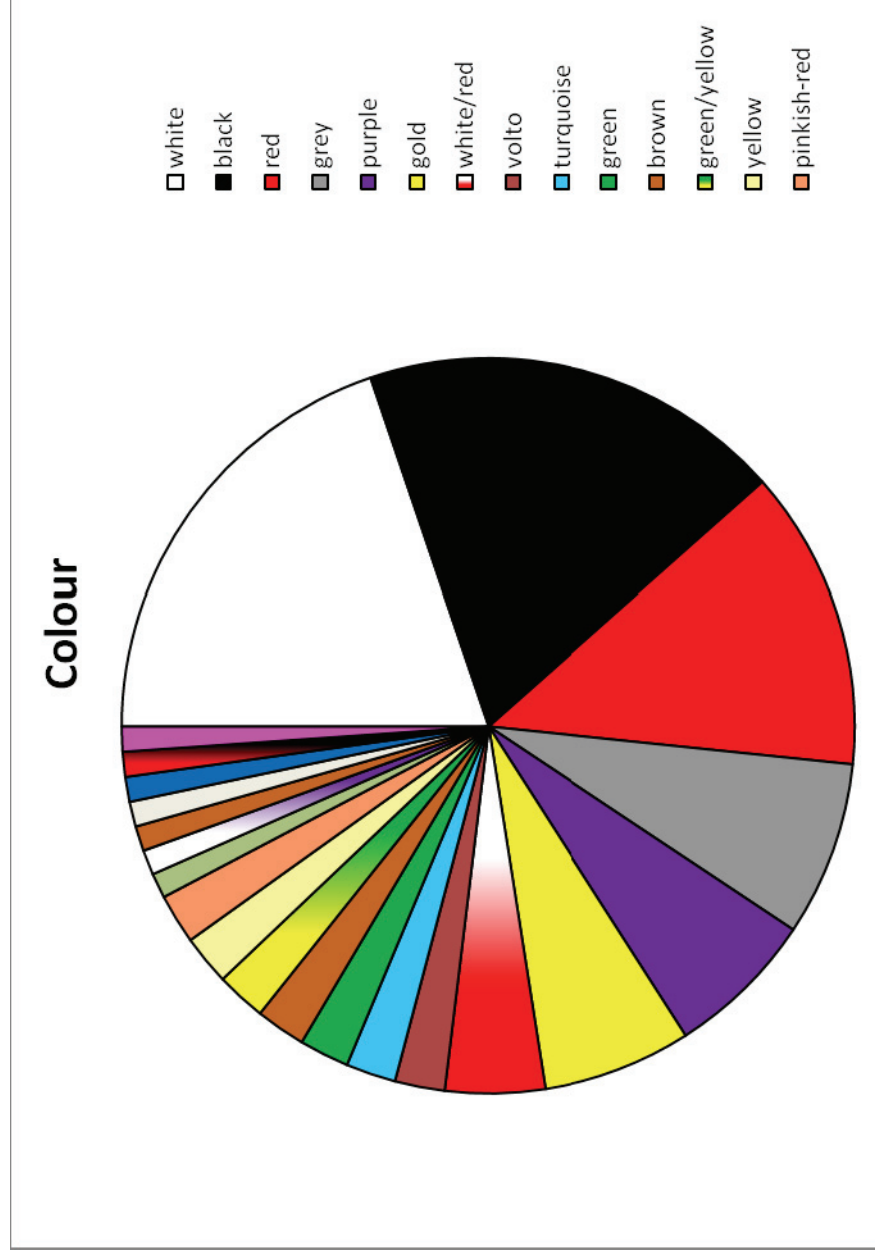


Chart of Guardaroba Colours for Bianca Capello



Appendix 5

Food Gift Letters

Nota bene: all original spellings have been maintained; all punctuation has been modernised; all abbreviations have been expanded. The letters are divided into three sections and arranged chronologically.

Section One: Giovanna

1565:

Date: 25 November 1565. ASF, MdP 518, pp. 512-514.

First Gift Recipient: Giovanna

First Gift Sender: Captain and Camirlingo of Verona

Second Gift Recipient: Margerete, Magdalena and Helena von Habsburg

Second Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: wine, sugar sculptures, candied fruit.

Letter from Polidoro Castelli in Verona to Francesco in Florence:

Dolce, 25 di Novembre 65.

Il Conte Pulidoro Castelli.

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor mio.

In questo punto, l'Illustrissimo signor Cardinale Borromei m'ha mandato a chiamare et fattomi vedere due lettere che ha havuto di Correggio, una dal Conte di Novellara et l'altra di messer Antonio Montarencio, agente di Sua Santità Illustrissima, che ha espedito di Trento per le provisioni che ha designata di fare per ricevere Sua Altezza [Giovanna] nel Territorio di Bologna et ne la citta. Scriveno che è quasi impossibile a poter andar in una giornata da Correggio a Santo Giovanni per esser il camino di 24 miglia lunghissime, il quale portara tanto più tempo quanto che li sono gli dui fiumi di Secchia et Panaro da passare, che in quel dirito non hanno porti che sieno sufficienti a passare se non pochissimi cavalli per volta, perche non sono paesi che siano molto frequentati.

Sua Santità Illustrissima discorre et se fonda sopra il parere che li dano detto Signor Conte et suo agente che seria bene andar a Castelfranco, che sera camino di miglia 16 et non si havera da passare se non il Panaro, che ha un porto che supplira benissimo per esser il fiume strettissimo, et sera ne più ne meno alloggiata Vostra Altezza suso il Bolognese. Per levare una difficulta che mi pare degna di consideratione, che è che volendo arrivar in quel luogo bisogna passare suso le mura di Modena, a Sua Santità Illustrissima e parso bene che se faccia saper tutto a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima per corriero in diligenza, acciò che la comanda quello che la vole si faccia. Lei dice che, havendo a far un alloggiamento suso il Bolognese tanto vicino a quella citta che la giudica che se potria camminare come se volesse, perche ad ogni modo non si puo arrivare a Bologna che non si tocca per un pezzo di quel stato, la vorria che de la

resolutione che ella fara, se si havera da andare a Santo Giovanni o a Castelfranco, che quanto più presto la facesse intendere l'animo suo al suo Vicelegato a Bologna, accioche potesse haver tempo di farle provisione.

A voler far prate[?] sopra quei dui fiumi o far caminar li porti che sono di sotto et di sopra al luogo dove si ha da passare non si puo fare senza l'autorita di gli ministri di Ferrara quale è padrone per tutto. Ogni volta che ella resolvera che se vadi a Castelfranco, poi che il camino non e più lungo che tanto, vedremo se sara possibile a caminare tanto discosto da Modena che non si veda la citta. Sua Illustrissima Santità desidera quanto sia possibile che ella commanda a Bologna a quale degli duoi luoghi s'haverà da far la provisione.

Adesso Sua Altezza ode la messa et di qua a due hore se partira per andare a Gusuolengo, che è il secondo alloggiamento sopra le terre di Venetiani che è lontano 10 miglia.

Il Capitano di Verrona et camerlengho vennero hiersera ad incontrarla [Giovanna] accompagnati da molti gentilhuomini Veronesi, et quando arrivassimo qua le fecero un presente del quale ne mando la nota. Sua Altezza si compiacque di vederla e ha risoluto voler mandare la malvasia [wine], le varie cose di Zuchari et gli canditi alle serenissime sorelle. Di comissione del signor Luogotenente se sono date Zuchari, torte et candelle et malvasia a gli Illustrissimi Borromei et Trento. Io poi ho ordinato che non si mova cosa alcuna, ne di quello che ha detto di voler mandare in Ispruch, ne d'altro ancora, accioche tutti gli ministri suoi conoscano che sono loro gli patroni e non noi. Noi andiamo drieto provvedendo del nostro a tutti nel modo che ho scritto costà, ma vogliono che se [?] a pagar li denari a Mantua. Domani si andara a Villafranca et l'altro a Mantua. Se mandano per il presente gli Roli per mano del Signor Gracino, quale scrive ancor lui et dira il resto che forse a me non soviene. Se li parera espediente di farci saper qua, o a noi o al Illustrissimo signor Cardinale Borromei, la deliberatione che ella fara del alloggiamento d'uno de gli dui luoghi sopradetti, sara caro a Sua Illustrissima Santità et noi ancor potremo concertare sul sicuro quanto bisognerà con il signor luogotenente. Detto signor Carlo Borromei adesso dice la messa et poi monta suso una barca et va a Verrona et tornara poi a trovar Sua Altezza a Villa franca. Il signor Cardinale di Trento passò hiersera inanci[?] poi che hebbe fatto compagnia [?] alla camera a Sua Altezza et [?] [?] lontana di qui 5 miglia fuori di strada. Sua Santità Illustrissima ancor Lei venera a Villa franca et tutti serano a caminar con Sua Altezza a Mantua. Per altra mia scritta di Trento Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima haverà saputo il

resto. Al Signor Conte San Secondo ho fatto vedere la presente et Sua Santità scrive ancor Lei. Non essendo questa per altro, con ogni debita riverentia, devotamente me le raccomando. Di Dolce alli 25 di Novembre verso le 17 hore.

Di Vostra Illustrissima et eccellentissima Signoria

Humilissimo et Devotissimo servitor,

Polidoro Castelli.

1566:

Date: 9 December 1566. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo 1, p. 44.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Cosimo I de' Medici

Gift Object: a deer and four pigs

Letter from Cosimo I de' Medici in Eremo di Lecceto, Tuscany to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora mia.

Vostra altezza mi fa troppo segnalato favore in tener sì amorevole memoria di ricordarsi dove io sia e così in ringratiarmi di così debol cosa come è la poca caccia chio li o mandato. Hora, havendo havuto miglior ventura a caccia, li mando un cervio e quattro porci grossi; dico miglior ventura perchè il vento ancora cia quasi portati oggi da cavallo e vostra altezza a fatto benissimo a non venir qua perchè, oltre che il luogo è strettissimo, il freddo e il vento e tanto strano che non si puo haver piacer nissuno, come meglio lo potra referir il principe [Francesco] il qual ne a sentito la parte sua. Io sarò pos domane a baciare le mani a vostra altezza e in tanto la supplico a tenermi in sua gratia, così la supplico a farmi favor di dir al principe che ordini a sua archibusieri che non amazzino le cervie femmine, accio va quando verra qua possa haver piacere, perchè oltre che fece contro il comandamento dato, fu per amazar il cardinale [Ferdinando] con la medesima archibusata che amazo la cervia, la qual se vostra altezza la vole gniene mandero, che ancor ne prese un'altra [?] [?] lequal se le vuol tutte dua melo facci saper, e con questo resto, baciando le mani di vostra altezza la qual nostro signor Dio conservi sana e felicissima come io li desidero. Del monasterio di lecceto senza frati li viiii di dicembre Mdlxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza

affectionatissimo servitor,

el Duca di fiorenza Siena.

Date: 9 December 1566. ASF, MdP 5927/A, Fascicolo 2, p. 145 [draft letter].

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Cosimo

Gift Object: venison and pigs

Letter of thanks from Giovanna in Florence to Cosimo I de' Medici:

(Di suo pugno)

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo signor mio et Patre osservandissimo.

La lettera amorevolissima che Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima mi ha scritto di suo pugno mi ha dato tanto contento che a volerlo esprimere mezo, bisognerebbe che io fussi migliore scrittora nella Lingua italiana che non sono. Però Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima mi scuserà, servendo appresso di Lei, che è prudentissima, queste poche parole per molte: la ringratio con tutto l'animo di questo favore, cioè di questo contento che mi ha dato; ora la supplico bene, amandomi come io veggo che mi ama, che meco non voglia far' alcuna cerimonia ma trattar non altrimenti che se io fussi sua figliola naturale, sì come io reputo Lei per mio Padre et Signore, cioe tenendoLa io in quel grado d'amore et osservantia che facevo la felice memoria del Imperatore mio Padre.

Restamj baciare le manj di Vostra Eccellenza del 2^o presente che mi ha fatto della sua caccia, quale mi goderò io tanto più volentierj, sendomj mandata da lei, et aspetterò che al suo ritorno me ne facci portar' dell'altra che harà presa di poi, il che aspetto con desiderio ma molto più la presentia di Vostra Eccellenza dalla quale dependon' tanti mei contentj.

Al Signor Principe mio ho detto quanto Vostra Eccellenza mi ha comandato che il resto potrà ella soggiugner' di bocca, et con questo bacio le mani Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, pregandoli da Dio ogni felicità maggiore.

Da Fiorenza alli 9 di Dicembre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima

Affettuosissima et obediante figliola et servitrice.

1567:

Date: 16 January 1567 [Florentine year 1566]. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo 1, p. 23.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Virginia Fieschi-Appiani d'Aragona

Gift Object: artichokes, peas and flowers.

Letter from Virginia Fieschi-Appiani d'Aragona, Princess of Piombino, in Pisa to Barbara d'Andrian, Giovanna's *cameriera maggiore* in Florence:

Molto magnifica Signora mia.

Mando a sua Altezza, non come presente degno di lei, ma bene perchè queste sorte di cose il paese di qui non lo comporta così di presente, e però per queste cause mi son fatta ardita, col mezo di Vostra Signoria, a che sua Altezza si compiaccia più presto della volontà mia che del presente; e però piacerà a Vostra Signoria presentar' la mia lettera con il picciol presente, ma insieme con esso presentare a sua Altezza me stessa per la più fidel e obligata servitrice che gl'habbia, e si come nessun mio desiderio maggiore che la conservazione in me della grazia di sua Altezza, così piaccia a Vostra Signoria come mia interpretatrice conservarmi in essa, sì come anco desidero che altrettanto faccia in la di Vostra Signoria con tutte quelle signore Dame, non siscordando la del signor Conte Sigismondo Rossi [Barbara Traap].

Di Pisa il di xvi di Gennaio M.D.lxvi.

Di Vostra Signoria

Como Sorella e per Servirla, la principessa di Piombino.

Date: 16 January 1567 [Florentine year 1566]. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo 1, p. 22.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Virginia Fieschi-Appiani d'Aragona

Gift Object: artichokes, peas and flowers.

Letter from Virginia Fieschi-Appiani d'Aragona, Princess of Piombino, in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima e mia Signora.

Non è già degno il presente che mando a Vostra Altezza ma bene è degna la volontà con che io la servo. Mi è venuto di Genova certi Carciofoli, Piselli e fiori. Per esser' frutta nova in questa parte, resterà Vostra Altezza servita accettarle, non come presente degno di lei ma come cosa che la stagione di qui non lo comporta; ma con esso accettando me stessa, che meli sono dedicata per sempre humil' sua servitrice; neda me viene desiderato maggior grazia che la conservazione in me stessa della grazia di Vostra

Altezza, ala quale con ogni riverenza gli bacio le mani, eprego al Signore Iddio per ogni sua felicità e per il mantenimento in me dela sua grazia. Di Pisa il di xvi di Gennaio Mdlxvi.

Di Vostra Altezza

Humilissima servitrice,

la Signora di Piombino.

Date: 18 January 1567 [1566 Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5927/A, Fascicolo 2, p. 7 [draft letter].

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Virginia Fieschi-Appiani, Princess of Piombino

Gift Object: flowers and fruit

Letter of thanks from Giovanna in Florence to Virginia Fieschi-Appiani d'Aragona, Princess of Piombino, in Genua:

Alla signora di Piombino alli 18 di Gennaro.

Il presente che Vostra Signoria mi ha mandato di fiori e frutta di Genova è stato molto bello et raro in questa stagione, però mi è stato charo e ve la ringrazio Vostra Signoria, ricordandole che se si vorra poi transferir' di qua per fare con noi questo carnovale, mi sarà molto grato. Però io la invito con questa conditione, quando non scomodj altri suoi disegni o del Signor suo Consorte. Ne occorrendomj dir' altro, le prego da Dio ogni contenteza. Da Fiorenza allij 18.

Date: 18 August 1567. ASMo, Ambasciatori a Firenze, Busta 22, Fascicolo dated 1567.

First Gift Recipient: Ridolfo Conegrani

Second Gift Recipient: Alfonso d'Este

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: plums

Letter from Ambassador Ridolfo Conegrani in Florence to Duke Alfonso II d'Este in Ferrara:

Da fiorenza il 18 Agosto 1567.

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor et patron osservandissimo. Vostra eccellenza Illustrissima haveva visto quanto le ho scritto del ragionamento ch'io ho hauto con

questo signor Duca sopra le cose del conte camillo montecucoli. Hora le dico che il segretario concino m'ha riferito che il signor Duca et signor principe si contenterano dar nelle mani di vostra eccellenza quei quattro ribelli ch'io le ho adimandato in nome suo, con patto però che ancor lej si contenta darle un tristo ne le mani che si ripara nel stato suo, et qua sara incluso il nome et loco dove si trova. Vostra eccellenza si conentera ancor lej farmi sapere il loco dove si trovano questi ribelli che lej desidera havere, perche il concino me l'ha chiesto acio li potesino far pigliare. Appresso le mando una scatola de susine simiane, le quali, essendo heri a desinare con sua Altezza, laudandole me ne fece dono et io le dissi ch'erano tanto belle ch'io pigliarej ardire di mandarle alla eccellenza vostra et ella mostro haverlo molto caro et me le mando per un suo stafiero insino a casa, e con questo quanto piu humilmente posso le bacio le mani e prego dio per ogni suo maggior contento.

Di vostra eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servitore,
Ridolfo Conegrani.

1568:

Date: 1 May 1568. ASF, MdP 6366, p. 371.

Gift Sender: Isabella de'Medici

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Object: fruit

Letter from Isabella de'Medici Orsini in Pisa to Giovanna:

Serenissima Regina.

Non ho manchato far subito al mio arrivo diligentia di frutte et quelle poche si sono trovate se li mandano, per far quello da lei ci venne comandato, ma non gia perche siano degne di lei; pero dia la colpa al tempo e non alla nostra volonta la quale è sempre prontissima a servirla come è nostro debito. La fiera di qui è tanto fredda che non ci è cosa che vaglia tanto che presto torneremo costà et li la serviremo di tutto quello si degnerà comandarci, et non essendo questa mia per altro, don pietro, il cardinale [Ferdinando] et io humilmente li bacciamo le mani. Che nostro signore la guardi e li dia tutto quello desidera. Ci fara bacciar le mani al signor principe da parte nostra e tenerci in sua buona gratia, di pisa adi 1 di maggio 1568.

Di Vostra Altezza
humilissima serva et cognata,

Dognia Isabella Medici Orsina.

Date: 4 October 1568. ASF, MdP 6366, p. 372.

Gift Sender: Isabella de' Medici

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Object: fruit

Letter from Isabella de' Medici Orsini in Poggio to Giovanna

Serenissima regina.

So che mi havera per scusata se sino adesso non li ho con mia lettere baciato le mani, et dia la colpa al non esser io amicha dar' male nove. Adesso che il duca [Cosimo] mio signore sta meglio ho preso animo a scriverli solo per dirli la sua salute et ricordarmi a vostra altezza per quella affetionatissima serva che li sono et saro sempre mentre viva. Andando per questi giardini ho trovato queste poche frutte che con questa mia le invio; quella accetti il buono animo et non il presente, perche ben conosco non esser degno di lei. La venuta del signor principe [Francesco] fece tal giovamento al duca mio signore che oggi in sedia e io a ragniare et sta assai meglio, anchorche non sia del tutto sano, et bacia le mani a vostra altezza, et cosi il cardinale [Ferdinando]; et non essendo questa mia per altro, humilmente le bacio le mani et la supplico mi tenghi in sua gratia et cosi in quella del principe mio signor.

Del poggio adi 4 di ottobre 1568.

Di Vostra Altezza

Humilissima serva che l'adora,

dognia Isabella medici orsina.

1569:

Date: 12 December 1569. ASF, MdP 1177, Inserto 12, pp. 353-354.

Gift Recipient: Cardinal Otto Truchsess de Waldburg and Pope Pius V.

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: fruit preserves

Letter from Alessandro de' Medici, Tuscan Ambassador in Rome, to Antonio Serguidi, Secretary in Florence:

Molto Magnifico et honorato signore Cavaliere.

Arrivò qui venerdì sera à notte il Vetturale, delquale m'haveva scritto Vostra Signoria con la sua de 28 del passato, et delle quattro casse che portò si fece subito consegnar' le due più strette indiritte al Cardinale d'Augusta [Otto Truchsess de Waldburg] a Sua Santità Illustrissima, insieme con la lettera della Principessa Nostra Signora. L'altre due della conserva del cotognato si presentorno hieri nel modo che eran'venute, ben'conditionate, a Sua Beneditione [Pope Pius V] per parte di Sua Altezza [Giovanna], con accompagnar'la lettera che ella le haveva scritto, con parole efficaci et piene d'affetto di reverenza et devotione di quella signora verso la Santità Sua.

Non si potria creder', messer Antonio mio, con quanta demonstratione di contento et d'allegrezza il Papa ricevessi quel Presente et come gli fosse accetto, parondole solo che fosse stata troppa provisione et da bastarle, come disse Sua Beneditione, dieci anni. Domandò con molt'amorevolezza dell'esser' di tutti cotesti nostri Illustrissimi Signori, et in particolar' di Sua Altezza, con voler' saper' il tempo che la doveva partorir' et con offerirsi a pregar' Dio per lei et mostrar' desiderio che ella lo facesse maschio, et insomma non saprei referir' a Vostra Signoria con quanta dolcezza Sua Santità parlasse con chi gli portò il Presente, che non contenta col primo ragionamento lo fece richiamar' indietro, poi che s'era licentiatò, per esser' ragguagliata più pienamente dell'Eccellenze loro et dell'istessa Sua Altezza, con mandarla a ringratiar' dell'amorevolezza sua. L'altra lettera per Nostro Signore, scritta a favor' di Monsignor Arcivescovo di Firenze, havev'io consegnata prima in mano di Sua Santità, con aggiugnervi quelli offittij che havevo giudicato migliori à beneficio della causa sua, come scrissi a Sua Signoria Reverendissima tre giorni sono; et mi piace di sperar' che il desiderio suo habbia ad haver' effetto, se egli adempierà quanto se gli è detto che Sua Beneditione harà caro di veder' intorno alle pretensioni che ha nel possesso della casa di Roma, et io non mancherò d'aiutar nela favorevole spedizione, così per debito d'obbedienza verso li communi patroni come per inclination'mia propria del servir' a quello honorato Prelato, al qual porto l'amor' et reverenza che mi si conviene. Le lettere di Vostra Signoria, per qual si voglia cagione le mi sieno scritte, mi son' sempre gratissime, con pervenir' da lei che tengo in luogo d'amorevol'fratello, come ancho per esser' ripiene tutte della sua solita cortesia, et per farmi fede della satisfattione di loro eccellenze Illustrissime della prontezza et volontà di questo mio servitio, che è cosa che desidero sopra ogn'altra. Rendendomi ben'certo che Vostra Signoria per l'affettione che la mi porta non mancherebbe d'avvertirmi, dove la conoscesse o intendesse che potessi mancare per ignoranza o poca esperienza mia, et così la prego a far' in ogni occasione

con tutto l'affetto dell'animo mio, co'l qual'anco me le offerisco et raccomandando di cuore.

Di Roma il di 12 di Dicembre M.D.Lxix.

Di Vostra Signoria Molto Magnifica

Affettionatissimo et come fratello,

Alessandro de'Medici.

1570:

Date: 19 June 1570. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 218r.

Gift Recipient: Suor Lucrezia

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: apples, dates.

Entry from the Guardaroba Medicea:

...mele rosate...datterì dolci...

Date: 23 June 1570. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo I, p. 83.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: the Priors and *Gonfaloniere* [magistrate] of Prato

Gift Object: small birds

Letter from the Priors and the Gonfaloniere in Prato to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Principessa unica signora nostra osservandissima.

Per satiffare in parte al debito di questa comunità, humil' servitrice di Vostra Altezza, in questa festività di San Giovanni batista mandiamo per li exhibitori delle presenti nostre in oratori a visitarla con paia quaranta d'ortolani [small birds], quali si degnerà godere a nome nostro. Et si degni accettare il buono animo nostro di farle assai maggior' riconoscimento che questo, ma di tutto dia la colpa alle nostre piccole forze, et a quella ci raccomandiamo che Dio le dia ogni prosperità et contento.

Di Prato il di xxiii di Guigno M.D.lxx.

Di Vostra Altezza Humili servitori, li

Priori et Gonfaloniere di Prato.

Date: 6 November 1570. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1570, p. 218.

Gift Recipient: Suor Lucrezia

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: almonds, biscuits.

Entry from the Guardaroba Medicea:

...mandorle, biscotti pisani...

1571:

Date: 3 February 1571 [1570 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5093, p. 246.

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Recipient: Cosimo

Gift Object: peaches

Letter from Cosimo in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora mia osservandissima.

Le persiche mandatemi da Vostra Altezza per sua cortesia mi sono state grate, come mi è stato anco gratissimo intendere il ben'essere di quella et delle figlioline et parimente della sua gravidezza. Di tutto sia ringratiato Dio, et ci conceda gratia che Vostra Altezza partorisca con salute per contento di lei et di tutti noi. Ringratiola del'amorevolezza et se havessi voglia di qualche cosa di qua, lo dica, per che desidero di servirla, et con questo fine li bacio le mani, pregandole da Dio nostro signore ogni contento.

Di Pisa el di iii di febraio 1570.

Di Vostra Altezza

Affectionato servitore,

El gran duca di Toscana.

Date: 28 July 1571. ASF, MdP 5926, p. 111.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: trout

Letter from Giovanna in Florence to Francesco in Genoa:

Serenissimo Signor Consorte Osservandissimo.

Iersera a una ora de notte arrivo un curiero conle trotte [trout], le quale o mangiate alegramente per amore de Vostra Altezza, avendo inteso questa bona nova quale aspeto Vostra Altezza condesiderio del resto. Nui stiamo tutti bene. Li basio le mane di fiorenza a di 28 de luglio 1571.

Di Vostra Altezza

Amorevolissima consorte,

Giovanna principesa di toscana.

Date: July 1571. ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1571, p. 384.

Gift Recipient: Anonymous

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: peaches, pears.

Entry from the Guardaroba Medicea:

Per dare a uno che portò delle pesche – Δ 0.2.0

Per dare a una donna che portò delle pere – Δ 0.2.0

Date: 9 November 1571. ASF, MdP 5925, p.441.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Maria Nerli Soderini

Gift Object: partridges

Letter from Maria de' Nerli Soderini in Terenzano, near Massa, to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima gran Duchesa di toscana.

Non debano le servitrice di Vostra Altezza star molto tempo senza demonst [dimostrare?] lanimo pronto che ano di servirla et oservarla come edebito suo, ateso che avendo continuamente persone di piu merito apreso di[?], efora in tuto e per tuto restino iscordate come indengnie di tanto bene, eper che io sono una diese di poco merito e di desiderio grandissimo che sia conociuto lanimo piu desideroso daltro che sia dimpiegar sempre la vita et quanto o al mondo per Vostra Altezza, ardisco coi questi pochi versi ricordarli la servitù et fede mia, et ancora farli parte di queste poche pernicie [partridges] di questi paesi, cosa indengnia de meriti di Signora tale quale e Vostra Altezza, ma a persone di stato e grandeza tale non è lecito che io ne la pari mia vogliano

presumersi di presentare, che tal saria come portare agua al mare. Solo basta mostrare l'animo mio desideroso sempre dinpiegarsi in tuto quello poso sempre inservizi di Vostra Altezza, la quale non guardera al poco merito mio, solo acietera la bona volonta emi tera ricordata tra le minime sue servitricie, e perdonera la presunzione mia la qual depende da afezion particolare auta sempre a Vostra Altezza, ala quale umilmente mi oferisco prontissima in quanto mi fara favor comandarmi, pregando nostro signor li doni ongni suo desiderio esalti Vostra Altezza ongni giorno in felicità maggiore, tenendomi in sua bona grazia. Di santerenzio el di 9 di novembre 1571.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima
umilissima servitricie,
maria nerli soderini.

Date: 17 December 1571. ASF, MdP 5925, p. 284.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Lelia Imperiale – Di Negro

Gift Object: branches of fruit

Letter from Lelia Imperiale – Di Negro in Genua to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora.

Desiderosa io che Vostra Altezza particolarmente cognosca me per tanto sua devotissima serva, come lo semo tutti di loro Altezze, et desiderosa similmente di haver gratia che la si serva di me in qualcosa, ho deliberato basciarli le mani con questa mia et attrevirmi[?] a visitarla con alcune frascherie di qua, che saranno in tre cassette, per provar se con questo mezzo, piacendogliene alcuna di esse, mi potesse venir fatto l'haver alle volte occasione d'esser impiegata da lei in qualche suo servizio. Supplico Vostra Altezza che mi perdoni l'attrevincento[?], attribuendolo alli desiderii che ho detto di sopra, et non essendo questa per altro, fo fine con basciar humilissimamente le mani di Vostra Altezza, pregando Idio che prosperi et felicitì la Serenissima Persona et stato suo, come da noi suoi servitori e desiato. Di genoa alli 17 di decembre, 1571.

Di Vostra Altezza
humilissima serva,
lelia di negro.

1572:

Date: 27 February 1572 [1571 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5925, pp. 263 r.- 264r.

Gift Recipient: the Emperor Maximilian II

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: preserves, candied fruit.

Letter from Lodovico Antinori and Giovanni Battista Concino in Vienna to Giovanna in Florence:

‘Serenissima Nostra Signora.

Il Portator della cassa di confetture arrivò qui alli xx. A noi consegnò la lettera di Vostra Altezza ma non la cassa, dicendo di haver parlato con il signor cameriero de Thon et di esser rimasto seco di portarla a lui, secondo lo ordine che gli haveva dato in Inspruch il maggiordomo maggiore del serenissimo Arciduca Ferdinando, iscusandosi di non haver saputo di dover consegnare la cassa a noi. Facemo legger dal segretario al detto signor de Thon la lettera propria di Vostra Altezza perchè ne dovesse far distesa relatione a sua Maestà Cesarea, sicome ne ha dipoi risposto di haver fatto diligentemente, et sicome a noi è facile di credere per haverlo sempre trovato molto cortese nelli affari di Vostre Altezze. Et per via sua et del caprino, si è ancho inteso che tutte le confetture, paste et altro sieno state trovate tanto ben conditionate che ha dato da maravigliare et fatto conoscere che il portatore ci habbi usato ogni gran diligenza. Et sono state tanto accette a Sua Maestà che non le ha volute fidare a nessuno, ma Lei medesima l’ha riservate et tenutosene le chiavi. L’ha laudate in tavola, pubblicamente, et al conte Filippin Doria ha detto di haverci trovato prugne così buone che passano quelle di Genova, et il caprino si è aiutato ad assaggiarne, con il porse in disputa con Sua Maestà se certi canditi fussino di cedronetti [citrons] o pur di limoncelli [lemons].

Il Portator dela cassa resta anchor qui con esso noi, dicendo che gli conviene aspettar l’espeditione dal signor de Thon secondo l’ordine datogli in Inspruch. Et noi non habbiamo mancato di offerirgli danari et ogni suo bisogno per il ritorno, con esshortarlo a non fare altra diligenza di risposta, essendo per bastare a Vostra Altezza di esser certificata da noi della consegnatione et suo buon servitio.

Con il qual fine noi, che non desideriamo altra cosa piu che di esser comandati da Vostra Altezza, le bacciamo le mani humilissimamente et la preghiamo perpetua felicità. Da Vienna alli xxvii di Febraio lxxi.

Di Vostra Alteza

Humilissimi sudditi et servitori,

Lodovico Antinori
Giambatista Concino.

Date: 14 March 1572 [1571 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5925, pp. 256 r+v.

Gift Recipient: the Emperor Maximilian II and his wife Maria

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: lemons

Letter from Lodovico Antinori and Giovanni Battista Concino in Vienna to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Nostra Signora.

Li limoncelli [lemons] arrivorno conditionati benissimo, ma gustano tanto alla Maestà dell'Imperatrice che, essendosi Lei trovata la sera doppo la cena quando furono presentati, se ne fece tanta parte che all'Imperatore ne restò un poco numero.

Il corriero portò qui le cose che doveva lasciare a Lintz. Li Inserti [grafts?] che non si potevano conservare si mandorno subito all'Imperatore, che gli hebbe molto grati per il suo Giardino nuovo, il quale, come Vostra Altezza harà di già saputo, è posto in un sito così maraviglioso, al rincontro della casiglia, et con tali fabbriche, coltivationi et abundantia di laghi et di fonti che si potrà ben dire che la sia stata impresa da uno Imperatore.

Restava il ritratto di Vostra Altezza, il quale si sarebbe conservato sino a suo nuovo ordine, ma Sua Maestà Cesarea havendo saputo dal Caprino che ci era, l'ha voluto et si è molto rallegrata in vederlo. Et noi l'habbiamo obbedita prontamente, sapendo essere il medesimo obbedir lei, che Vostra Altezza, alla quale bacciamo humilissimamente le mani, pregandole da Nostro Signor Dio perpetua felicità. Da Vienna alli xiiii di Marzo M. D. Lxxi.

Di Vostra Alteza

Humilissimi sudditi et servitori,

Lodovico Antinori

Giambatista Concino.

Date: 9 November 1572. ASF, MdP 581, p. 98.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: the Cardinal of Altopasso

Gift Object: wine and poultry [traditional post-partum foods]

Letter from the Cardinal of Altopasso in San Miniato to Francesco in Florence:

Serenissimo Signor Principe patron mio colendissimo.

Ho inteso il felice parto della Serenissima Principessa con salute sua et della bella figliuolina, pregando la Maestà Divina che prosperi l'una et l'altra. Et poi che non mi e concesso ancora per la mia indispositione et mala stagione venir personalmente (come havrei desiderato) à rallegrarmene con l'Altezze Vostre Serenissime, m'e parso farlo col presente mio mandato et mandar' a Sua Altezza del trebbiano et pollastre d'India d'Altopasso, sperando che quella per sua humanità si degnerà accettar tutto volentieri da mia devota servitù, la qual semp' prega Nostro Signor Dio per la salute loro, con raccomandarle reverentemente l'antica servitù mia, hormai di settant'anni, sperando ancora haver gratia da Dio di trovarsi al casamento del figlol maschio che le darà nel primo felice parto di Sua Altezza et baciandole con reverenza la mano farò fine qui. Di San Miniato a viiii di Novembre 1572.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humile servitore, Il maestro Generale d'Altopasso.

Date: 15 December 1572. ASF, MdP 5094, Fascicolo 1, p. 89.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: fruit and ducks

Letter from Francesco in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora Consorte Amatissima.

Nel ritorno mio di Livorno mi trovo due lettere di Vostra Altezza che mi hanno dato molto piacere per la salute sua et delle bambine et quanto a Sua Altezza [Cosimo], ella ha preso questa mattina certe pillore che hanno fatto molta operatione et l'hanno lassata molto scarica et, se potrò indurla a volersi curare, spero in Dio che sanera interamente et io, passato che sia il Signor Marcantonio Colonna, disegno di tornarmene, non sendo necessaria qui la persona mia. Fra tanto mando a Vostra Altezza alcuni cedri et limoncini con nove anatre che ho ammazzate hoggi nel mio ritorno qui, ne sendo questa per altro le bacio le mani et prego Dio che la prosperi. Di Pisa il dì xv di Dicembre 1572.

Di Vostra Altezza
Consorte,
Don Francesco de' Medici Duce di Toscana.

1573:

Date: 27 Aprile 1573. ASF, MdP 5926, pp. 147 r-v.

First Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Second Gift Recipient: Francesco

First Gift Sender: Captain Lorenzo da Fermo

Second Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: unidentified foodstuffs and a pair of hunting dogs

Letter from Giovanna in Loreto to Francesco:

Serenissimo Signore Consorte osservandissimo.

Con la gratia di Dio comparsi hieri in questa Santissima Casa con tempo tanto propitio et favorevole che più non potea desiderare. Io mi porto benissimo et pare ch'io sia stata sempre in riposo, et li honori et carezze di ministri di Sua Santità [Pope Gregory XIII] sono andate ogni giorno augumentando in tutti i luoghi. Stasera ci si aspetta il Signor Christofano Buoncompagno, Nipote di Nostro Signore et Governatore d'Ancona, per visitarmi et invitarmi a quelch'io penso a andar in quella Città, ma come io habbia essequite le mie devotioni della confessione et comunione, che sara il giorno dell'Ascensione giovedi, mi partirò venerdi per Iesi et mi scuserò col detto signore, si come feci l'altro giorno con un suo gentilhuomo che mi mandò per il medesimo effetto. Haverei con più satisfattione et quiete d'animo atteso alle orationi in questa Gloriosa Casa, se mi fussero prima comparse novelle di Vostra Altezza del S.or Granduca mio suocero [Cosimo] et delli altri, pure mi riposo con la fede et speranza che ciascuno stia con salute, per la quale io porgerò i miei humilissimi et caldissimi preghi. Et per la felicità di Vostra Altezza Non voglio lasciar di dirle che tra gl'altri Personaggi et gentilhuomini c'hanno usato molte amorevoli dimostrationi verso di me in questo paese, è il Capitano Lorenzo da Fermo che, oltra l'essersi mosso di quella Città per venirmi a incontrare con gran truppa di cavalla a Tolentino et accompagnarli sempre sin qui, questa mattina mi ha fatto un presente di diverse cortesie da mangiare con un par di cani da quaglie et altre cose, che mi par che meriti d'esser scritto a Vostra Altezza, alla quale ho risoluto di condurre i cani per donargliele, che so le saranno accetti. Le soggiugnerò

ch'egli dimostra poi oltra questi effetti con l'animo et con le parole di continuar la sua devotione et servitii con Vostra Altezza. Io l'ho visto benignamente perché mi paria che fusse il manco favore ch'io potessi fargli. Son venuti qui duoi mandati del Signor Duca et Principi d'Urbino a compiere et altre comunità hanno fatto il medesimo. Io passo il più del tempo in questa Santa Cappella et ne piglio tanta consolazione che porto invidia a quelli che ci son vicini et son certa che interverria a Vostra Altezza il medesimo quando si ritrovassi qui presente. Il Vescovo di Gaiarlo[?], già Nuntio in Francia et hoggi Governatore di questa Provincia, s'è ingegnato di carezzarmi et honorarmi assai, con venirmi incontro di là da Tolentino et accompagnarmi in questo Castello, et io gli faccio buona cera con mostrare che questi suoi uffitij mi sieno grati. Vostra Altezza mi perdoni se non le scrivo di mio pugno poi che, oltre le orationi, le visite mi tengano quasi tutto il giorno occupata. Tutta questa mia Corte si conserva prosperamente et Monsignore d'Altopasso in particolare, che stà molto gagliardo et sebene mostra di star volentieri, tuttavia mi ricorda a spedirmi presto, ancorche non sia necessario, desiderando più di riveder Vostra Altezza ch'egli non saprebbe spronarmi, col qual fine le bacio le mani, che Nostro Signor Dio la conservi felice. Di Loreto il di 27 d'Aprile 1573.

Di Vostra Altezza

Amorevolissima consorte,

Giovanna principesa d'toscana.

Date: 1 September 1573. ASF, MdP 5924, p. 36.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Lionardo Rabatti

Gift Object: figpecker birds

Letter from Lionardo Rabatti [Captain] in Mugello, Tuscany to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran Principessa.

Apressandosj al tempo che s'ha afar' l'ufitio dellj Otto dj guardia et balia [criminal justice magistracy], Humilissimamente Ricorro a Vostra Altezza Serenissima che si degnj, come fedele servitore ch'io li sono, favorirmj a presso il serenissimo Principe suo consorte et ancora dj mandarlo a ricordar' amesser Giovannj Contj che, come suo servitore, in tale ufizio li sia Raccomandato, che la servirò sempre fedelissimamente et

ne pregherò iDio che li dia ogni contento et magna grandeza. Lj mando sessanta beccafichj [a small bird prized for its meat], non perchè il presente dj Vostra Altezza Serenissima degnio, ma per la mia Humil et fidel servitù et, con quella Reverenzia che haver' debbo maggiore, Humilissimamente li bacio lamano.

Dj Mugello il dj primo dj settembre 1573.

Dj vostra Altezza serenissima Humilissimo et fedel servitore,
Lionardo Rabattj.

Date: 30 October 1573. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 51.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Ugolino Grifoni

Gift Object: fruit, partridges and a goat.

Letter from Ugolino Grifoni, Maestro Generale di Altopascio [head of the order of the knights of Tau] in Altopascio near Pistoia, Tuscany to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora Patrona mia colendissima.

Francho Borromei mio Agente, presente latore, presenterà a Vostra Altezza Serenissima delle frutte del mio giardino di Pescia, sette cotornici [Greek partridge] vive et un caprio stato preso per disgratia da cani delle mie pecore, quale subito lo dedimai a quella, supplicandola che tutto goda insieme col Serenissimo Signore Principe [Francesco], et non guardino al piccolo presente ma alla devota servitù mia, la quale hormai in questa grave età et accidente della percossa ricevuta e causa checon mio dispiacere me ne stò qui, in quella posa che ricerca il male secondo il consiglio del Medico et come intenderà più largamente dal medesimo latore, si di questo come della diligenza che ha usato e usa il Signor Cavaliere Urbano, Agente di lor' Altezze in Venetia, al qual' io replico chetrovando un buon Maestro subito facci mettere mano alla panoretta di filo d'Argento, et non guardi né alla spesa né al tempo, et non trovandolo mi avisi perché si possa fare in Fiorenza. Di che mi é parso dar aviso a Vostra Altezza perché sappia lamemoria ch'io tengo che laresti servita, benché sia cosa piccola. Pregando Nostro Signor Dio che mi dia grazia di posserla servire in maggiore, Non lassando, in questa solenità di tutti li santi, celebrando la Messa pregar Sua Divina Maestà per lei, che le dia ogni contentezza come si desidera da noi altri suoi servitori. D'Altopasso alli xxx di ottobre 1573.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima Humilissimo servitore, Il maestro Generale d'Altopasso.

Date: 18 November 1573. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 8.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Domenico Rinuccini

Gift Object: perfume and fruit

Letter from Domenico Rinuccini [Captain] in Rocca di Sala, near Lucca, to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima gran Principessa patrona mia unicha.

Partendomi dal governo di questa banda, et la benignita del Serenissimo Principe [Francesco] havendomi deputato alla banda di Valle d'esa, et havendo in ordine il tributo di questo anno: una cassa drentovi 13 fiaschi di acque odorifere che qua si stillano, gliene mando in questo mio scombero insieme con delle frutte del giardino qui della Roccha, quale lassero al mio scambio che cosi vada seguitando. Ne sendo questa per altro, umilmente di cor' me li raccomando, pregandola mi tenga in sua buona grazia et del Serenissimo Principe suo, ch'il nostro Signore Iddio la felicit. Della Roccha di Pietrasanta il dí 18 di Novembre 1573.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Umilissimo,

Domenico Rinuccini.

1574:

Date: 9 January 1574. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 215.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Ugolino Grifoni

Gift Object: poultry, wine and cheese.

Letter from Ugolino Grifoni, Maestro Generale di Altopascio [head of the order of the knights of Tau] in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence

Serenissima Signora GranDuchessa Patrona Colendissima.

Doppo la partita di Vostra Altezza Serenissima, fui consigliato da questi Medici a non mutar'aria in questa stagione, perche come questa e dolce perli vecchi, quella di fiorenza e cruda et sottile et poco meglio e quella di San Miniato. Onde in gratia di

Vostra Altezza Serenissima mi son conservato assai bene, pigliandomi piacere di veder restaurare la Chiesa della nostra Commenda di san Paulo, in la quale si e fatto una sacristia et accomodati dua Altari antichissimi, in ciascheduno de quali si son trovate alcune Reliquie, talche oltre all'ordinario essendosi acresciuta questa Devotione, e stata molto più visitata questa Chiesa in queste feste et, seguitandosi d'accomodarla tuttavia, spero che piacerà a quella quando tornerà in questa Città, dove si ragiona che la debbi venire questa quaresima. Et come la intenderà da Horatio mio Agente, presente latore, io tengo grand desiderio d'esser presto da lei per servirla, come ricerca il debito di mia devota servitù et, se in altro non potrò compiere al desiderio mio, seguirò di tener memoria di quella nel mio Divino offitio. Et perche di qua non ho cosa degna di lei da mandarle, le mando dua Galli d'India, del Trebbiano et caciotte d'Altopasso, suplicandola che si degni non guardare al piccol presente ma all'animo et volontà mia, con pregar sempre Nostro Signor Dio che felicissima la conservi insieme con le sue dolci figlioline. Da Pisa li ix di Gennaro 1574.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humile Servitore, il maestro Generale d'Altopasso.

Date: 31 March 1574. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 250.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Pietro de'Medici

Gift Object: tortoises and sloes

Letter from Don Pietro de'Medici in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora mia Cognata osservandissima.

Volendo adesso trasferirmi a Livorno, m'è parso di farlo sapere a Vostra Altezza et insieme inviarle alcune Testuggini et parecchi prugniuoli. Le haverei mandato del pesce ma non ce se ne trova; com'io sia in Livorno, farò pescare et qualche si piglierà di buono sarà il suo, desiderando sopramodo di satisfarle et servirla. Parmi mill'anni che'l Signor Don Giovanni [Don Giovanni d'Austria] passi per spagna, perche ricordandomi qua de passatempi ch'io ho lasciati costà et de favori ch'io ricevo continuamente da Vostra Altezza, patisco assai di questa mia assenza, si che desidero di ritornar, non ci havendo in questo paese troppi gusti. Tra tanto Vostra Altezza mi conservi nella sua buona gratia et mi comandi. Che Nostro Signore la conservi felice. Di Pisa il di Ultimo di Marzo 1574.

Di Vostra Altezza
Umile servitore et cognato,
Don pietro de medici.

Date: 2 April 1574. ASF, MdP 5925, p. 411.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Fulvia Conti Sforza

Gift Object: sloes

Letter from Fulvia Conti Sforza, Countess of Santa Fiora, in Grosseto to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora mia padrona colendissima.

Mando all'Altezza vostra quattro prugnoli [sloes], che per i tempi freddosi che di qua vanno, sono i primi che quest'anno si siano potuti havere. Mi farà somma gratia accettarli con quella gratitudine che mi promette la sua benignità. Et poi che non posso inviargli da queste bande cosa maggiore, l'Altezza vostra si degnerà appagarsi della devotione et osservanza che come serva affetionatissima gli porto, conservandomi tuttavia in sua buona gratia. E con questo gli fò humilmente riverenza, pregando Dio nostro signore che gli conceda ogni felicità.

Di santafiora li ii d'Aprile del lxxiiii.

Di vostra Altezza Serenissima

Affetionatissima et humilissima serva,

Fulvia conti Sforza.

Date: 21 June 1574. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 389.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Elena Cellesi Panciatichi

Gift Object: trout

Letter from Elena Cellesi Panciatichi in Pistoia to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Regina.

L'affetto del quore da mortalj non si puo senò dagli extrinsechi conoscere. Volendo dimostrare io alla Altezza Vostra quanto in me sia el desiderio di essere impressa nel animo di quella et acceptata per una delle sua humili serve, ancor che io sappia la

disparita del servo al signore non havere eguale comparatione, niente dimancho, sapendo la grande humanita della Altezza vostra, ho volsuto con questo piccolissimo presente di trote mantenere nella mente di quella vivo il mio nome, non per la forza del presente ma per la memoria che mi resta di Alexandro magno, che da un suo capitano tanta gratamente risuono che damolti altri potenti huomini porti. Così da quella speranza confortata con questo piccolo ricordo supplico la serenissima altezza sua si degni me et il mio nuovo marito tenere nella sua bellissima memoria, acceptandogli per humili et fidelissimi servitori quali, non possendo con altro al presente servire quella, con il pregare il grande idio per ogni suo felice contento serviremola, baciando humilmente la Veste della altezza sua. Di Pistoia el di 21 di Giugno 1574.

Della Altezza vostra serenissima

Humile servitrice,

Elena Cellesi panciatichi.

Date: 19 August 1574. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 338.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: the Bishop of Arezzo [Bernardetto Minerbetti]

Gift Object: plums

Letter from the Vescovo d'Arezzo in Arezzo to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran Duchessa Signora mia osservandissima.

Non puo Vostra Altezza Serenissima aspettar' da questo povero Sigonr altro dono che di frutti, con cio sia che le forze mie non si allarghino piu oltre. Io adunque le mando delle susine simiane che ha prodotto questo mio giardino le più belle, con desiderio che le sieno care all'Animo e grate al Gusto, e con questa occasione le ricordo l'Horiolo el quale è gia passato l'Anno che le piacque di promettermilo. Nostro Signor Dio la Conservi e Consoli come lei et tutti i servitori suoi desiderono. Che Io mi le raccomando in Gratia. D'Arezzo xix di Agosto 74.

Serenissima Gran Duchessa,

Bacia la mano di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Il suo humile servo, Vescovo d'Arezzo.

Date: 4 October 1574. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 96.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Domenico Rinuccini

Gift Object: thrushes

Letter from Domenico Rinuccini [Captain] in Colle, to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima gran Duchessa et Patrona mia unicha.

Per questo mio fidato servitore, li mando cento cinquanta sei tordi che questa mattina ho presi in dua uccellari che fo qui in questi boschi di Colle, et questo anno in questi paesi se ne piglia pochi rispetto alli altri anni, et questo sara il tributo che li faro ogni anno mentre staro qua, in Cambio de fiaschetti de l'acque di Pietrasanta, de quali glie ne mando anchor venti che mi sono stati mandati da quelli soldati di Pietrasanta. Ne m'occorrendo altro, se non umilmente di cor' raccomandarmeli et pregarla mi tenghi in sua buona gratia. Di Colle il di 4 d'ottobre 74.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Umilissimo,

Domenico Rinuccini.

1575:

Date: 25 February 1575. ASF, MdP 5923, p. 151.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Lelia Imperiale – di Negro

Gift Object: branches of fruit

Letter from Lelia Imperiale – Di Negro in Genua to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora.

Io ho sempre pensato che Vostra Altezza havessi ricevuto una lettera mia che mesi sono li scrissi, dandoli aviso che avevo inviato a pisa a francesco santo regolo due cassette delle solite frascherie per che gliele facesse pervenire, si come ho saputo che fece. Havendo poi inteso chel signor picho iacomo della staffa, a chi mandai detta lettera per che la desse a Vostra Altezza, ha detto di non haverla havuta, ho voluto, si come con quella facevo, suplicarla con questa che si contenti escusarmi se non seran reusite questo anno bone secondo il solito, con esser certa che non e seguito per pocha diligentia ma si ben per esser stati loro li tempi poco accomodati; et perche non puo esser che di quelle sorte mandateli alcuna di esse non li gusti piu delle altre, prego Vostra Altezza che si degni farmene dar notitia, acio che io possi usar tanto maggior

diligentia in quelle che sapro esser piu gustate da lei, alla quale con questo fine bascio humilissimamente le serenissime mani, pregando jdio che la prosperi et felicitì come da me sua devotissima serva e desiderato. Di genoa alli 25 di febbraio 1575.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Serva humilissima,

Lelia di negro.

Date: 1 September 1575. ASF, MdP 5925, p. 415.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Baldovino Baldovini, Bishop of Aversa

Gift Object: trout

Letter from Baldovino Baldovini in Barga [near Lucca] to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran Duchessa signora et patrona mia osservandissima.

Non havendo qui a barga con che altro fare reverentia a' la Altezza vostra serenissima, gli mando queste poche trote. Quella pigli il bono animo mio et mi perdoni, perchè quando sarò a' la chiesa mia in Aversa non mancherò di supplire al debito et desiderio mio, et humilissimamente gli bascio le mani, supplicandola mi conservi ne la sua bona gratia et pregando la Maestà di Dio che conservi et felicitì sempre sua persona serenissima.

Di Barga il primo di settembre 1575.

De la Altezza vostra serenissima

Devotissimo et humilissimo servo et vasallo,

Il Vescovo d'Aversa.

1576:

Date: 15 May 1576. ASF, MdP 5927, p. 215.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Maria Nerli-Soderini

Gift Object: fruit

Letter from Maria Nerli-Soderini in Terenzano near Massa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima gran duchesa di toscana.

Avendo comodità di mandare a Vostra Altezza de frutti che produce non ggia questo paese dove io abito ma dilà dalalpe, sendo in questi tempi novelizia grande, non voglio io inongni luogo inongni occasione et in tuto quello per me si potra, lasciar di mostrar qual sia la servitu duna che sempre sia con desiderio che Vostra alteza li sia comandato, ne mai apotuto otenerlo per grazia ma pur men asai favore. Non sia desprezato la[?] de mia piccioli presenti, i quali son da pigliar [?], sola la volunta la quale e sempre di servir Vostra Altezza et pregar nostro Signore esalti [?] ongni ggiorni in felicità maggiore. Di san terenzio el di 15 di maggio 76.

di Vostra Altezza Serenissima
umilissima servitrice,
maria nerli soderini.

1577:

Date: 17 May 1577 MdP 5927, p.134.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Leonora Battaglino (German ex-lady-in-waiting to Giovanna)

Gift Object: handiwork and preserves

Letter from Francesco Biffoli in Naples to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora.

Per la di Vostra Altezza de 4 del presente, mi comanda che debbia pagare alla signora Leonora, moglie del Barone Battaglino, scudi cento, e subito che Io hebbi l'ordine dell'Altezza Vostra celi mandai aofferire eseli son pagati e mi hamandato qui InCasa una scatola dilavori e un'altra di Conserve, e per seguir l'ordine di Jacopo mormorai In Nome dell'Altezza Vostra si mandano a Roma a Antonio Arrigucci e Francesco sangatti, con ordine che subito sieno mandati Insiena al Cavalier saracino per seguirne l'ordine di Vostra Altezza. E di quest'altra settimana darolli avviso achi harà a far pagare Ilvalore delli detti ▼.di cento Insieme con le spese che pagherò in questa Dogana e porto di qui a Roma; e di roma a siena si e scritto sivagliano dal Cavaliere Saracino della spesa vi occorresse. E lascatola delli lavori e coperta di Canavaccio, scrittovi sopra: alla GranDuchessa di Toscana, eil simile è scritto all'altra chenon è coperta. Fara dare Insiena Vostra Altezza quell'ordine che li piacerà, et mi sara Caro il sapere che tutto cammini conforme a sua volontà, pregando Dio per sua salute et che all'arrivo di questo habbi fatto un bel figlio mascolo, ricordando all'Altezza Vostra la

gratia che mi ha fatto di una delle figliole di Vincenzo d'Ambra in accettarla al suo servitio. Dio la felicitì. [?] In Napoli adi xvii di maggio 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Servitore, Francesco Biffoli.

Date: 27 August 1577. ASF, MdP 5927, p. 184.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Achille Sergardi, Abbot of San Galgano.

Gift Object: pheasants

Letter from Achille Sergardi in San Galgano, near Siena, to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran Duchessa, Unica Patrona et signora Colendissima.

Essendo venuta occasione questa mattina di pigliarsi in questa mia Villa otto Fagiani, non ho saputo che meglio disporne che visitarne Vostra Altezza Serenissima. Glieli mando dunque, supplicandola che si degni accettarli et ricevere questo piccolo segno della molta et ossequentissima servitu d'un fedelissimo vassallo come le sono io, et pregandole dall'Altissimo preservatione et aumento dela santa grazia sua, con felice esaltazione, le bacio humilmente la veste. Da San Galgano li 28 d'Agosto 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Humilissimo et fedelissimo servo et vasallo,

Acchille Sergardj.

Date: 2 November 1577. ASF, MdP 5927, p. 73.

Gift Recipient: Eleonora Cibo Malaspina-Fieschi-Vitelli

Gift Sender: Giovanna

Gift Object: wild boar

Letter from Eleonora Cibo Malaspina-Fieschi-Vitelli in Florence to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Signora Patrona mia sempre osservandissima.

Rendo infinite gratie a Vostra Altezza Serenissima dell'amorevole lettera che mi ha scritto, et del Cignale che si è degnata mandarmi, del quale ne ho subito, per recreatione del monastero [the Convent of the Murate, where Eleonora spent most of her time after the death of her husband Chiappino Vitelli] in questo ogni santi, fatto la maggior' parte

alla Reverenda matre Abbadessa; et havendoli anco detto et havuto ragionamento seco et con l'altre matre, se con questo si deve assolvere l'Altezza Vostra dalla confettione [perhaps some kind of sweet] che si aspettava del battesimo del serenissimo signor Principe [Giovanna's son Filippo], si è passato in consiglio fra noi, per non far' torto all'Infinita liberalità et cortesia del suo animo, che non si conceda altrimenti, ma che Vostra Altezza, avvicinandosi il nuovo parto et nascendo una Principessa, sia con l'istessa amorevolezza che vols'essere in la passata occasione, obbligata all'hora in ogni modo a darci la confettione, et facendo un fratello al Signor Principe, a mandarci un'altro Cignale, et intanto tutto il monastero et io insieme godremo il favor' fattomi da Vostra Altezza di questo d'adesso, et pregheremo Iddio, come si fà di continuo, che le conceda felice parto et ogn'altra maggior'allegrezza che desidera. Et sarà'l fine, col quale la supplico a tenermi in sua gratia per quell'humilissima et [?] le sono. Et D. Cat:na mia, la matre Abbadessa et io le facciamo reverenza et le bacciamo le serenissime mani. Di Fiorenza alli 2 di Novembre 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Serva obbligatissima,

Leonora Cibo.

1578:

Date: 27 February 1578 [1577 in the Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5924, p. 119.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: oysters

Letter from Rocco Galletti [Francesco's majordomo] in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran Duchessa mia Patrona Colendissima.

Sendo Venute di livorno adesso delle ostriche fresche, il Gran duca [Francesco] mi ha comandato che per Cavalcata ne mandi un Cestino a Vostra Altezza Serenissima, et così, adesso che sono hore 22, la spedischo et haro Carissimo venghino ben conditionate sicome le mando. Sua Altezza Serenissima [Francesco] sta benissimo et Io Humilissimamente resto servitore della Altezza Vostra Serenissima Alla quale il signor Iddio doni quanto desidera. Di Pisa il di 27 di Febbraio 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Obbedientissimo Servitore,
Rocco Galletti Majordomo.

Date: 28 February 1578 [1577 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5924, p. 120.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: sloes

Letter from Rocco Galletti [Francesco's majordomo] in Pisa to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran Duchessa mia Patrona Colendissima.

Il Serenissimo Gran Duca mi ha dato Caricho di Mandarli li prognioli [sloes] li sono stati donati nel numero che essa vederà, et così li mando per Cavalcata spedita questo giorno delli 28 a hore 19. Vostra Altezza Serenissima si ricordi di comandarmi come aservitore obbedientissimo che le sono, alla quale nostro signore doni ogni contento. Di Pisa dove sempre epiovuto et piove,
il dì 28 di febbraio 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Obbedientissimo servitore,

Rocco Galletti Majordomo.

Date: 1 March 1578 [1577 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5924, p. 99.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco Baldovinetti

Gift Object: sloes

Letter from Francesco Baldovinetti in Pisa to Giovanna:

Serenissima Gran Duchessa.

Sendomi Venuti dj queste maremme questi pochi prugniuoli [sloes], parendomi novellitia li mando a Vostra Altezza Serenissima, quali si degnierà godersi per mio amore, e se il presente è piccolo sono certo che accetterà il buono mio animo quanto desidera servire a lei con tutto il cuore, e non sendo questa per altro resto pregando idijo che felicissimamente la mantenga.

Di Pisa il dj primo di marzo 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima
Umilissimo et obligatissimo servitore,
Francesco Baldovinetti.

Date: 6 March 1578 [1577 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5924, p. 100.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Rocco Galletti

Gift Object: oysters, sloes, bitter oranges, lemon verbena

Letter from Rocco Galletti [majordomo] in Seravezza near Lucca to Giovanna in Florence:

Serenissima Gran duchessa mia Patrona Colendissima.

Basciaj le mani al Serenissimo Gran Duca [Francesco] a nome di Vostra Altezza Serenissima delle ostriche et prugnioli [sloes] li mandai di Pisa, Conforme alla Commissione havuta da Vostra Altezza Serenissima per lettera di messer Pietropaolo Corboli. Questa mattina mi ha comandato che li mandi le melangole [bitter oranges] et limoncini [lemon verbena] così variati come vedera qualj saranno in un Cestino et lo spedisco per cavalcata. Mi resta suplicarla si degni comandarmi et mi tengo per quello obbligato servitore che lesono, Alla quale nostro Signore doni quanto desidera. Di Seravezza il dì 6 di Marzo 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima
Obbedientissimo servitore,
Rocco Galletti Majordomo.

Date: 8 March 1578 [1577 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5926, p. 170.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: fish and fruit

Letter from Giovanna in Florence to Francesco:

Serenissimo Signore Consorte osservandissimo.

La promessa che l'Altezza Vostra mi faceva con la lettera sua del iiii di farmi parte della pescagione questa mattina viene adempita, poi che con lettere del Cavaliere Serguidi [Francesco's Secretary] ho riceuto un cestino fra trote et scaglioni, inviatomi per parte

di Lei, che mi é stato gratissimo et massime in questo giorno che é di magro per me ancora, che con tanto piú gusto mi goderò questi favore che l'Altezza Vostra m'ha fatto insieme con le merangole et limoncini che il Maiordomo [Rocco Galletti] ancora m'ha mandati, li quali m'hanno fatto per buono spatio passare il tempo con molto mio piacer'. Mi riguardai la varietà di quei pomi et quanto bellamente la natura habbi scherzato con essi, che se bene io ne ho visti delli altri simili, non mai tanti insieme né così belli. In ricompensa adunque del piacere ch'io ho preso di questi suoi favori, le diro ch'io sto molto bene et tutti li nostri figliuoli insieme, con desiderio di riveder Vostra Altezza quanto più presto, et fra tanto preghiamo Dio che la conservi sana et io con tutto 'l cuore le bacio le mani. Di fiorenza li viii di marzo 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Affetionatissima consorte et serva,

La Gran duchessa di toscana.

Date: 13 March 1578 [1577 in Florentine year]. ASF, MdP 5924, p. 102.

Gift Recipient: Giovanna

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: citrons

Letter from Rocco Galletti in Livorno to Giovanna in Florence

Serenissima Gran Duchessa Mia Patrona Colendissima.

Mando a Vostra Altezza Serenissima per ordine del Serenissimo Granducha [Francesco] 31 Cedro [citrons] in uno Cestino, quali spedischo per Cavalcata questa Hora che siamo alle 21, et da Sua Altezza Serenissima [Francesco] mi viene commissso che seco faccia scusa senon seli manda del pescio, il che si Causa per non pigliarsene, et Io li posso dire che mai e stato giorno buono ne che sia fatto altro che piovere da che partimmo dal poggio. Nel resto la suplico acomandarmi et siraccordi di me suo obbligatissimo servitore, Alla quale nostro signore doni quanto desidera. Di livorno il dì 13 di Marzo 1577.

Di Vostra Altezza Serenissima

Obbedientissimo servitore,

Rocco Galletti Majordomo.

Section Two: Eleonora

1566:

Date: 8 May 1566. ASM, AG, Busta 2142 bis, Fascicolo VII, p. 513.

Gift Recipient: Guglielmo

Gift Sender: Eleonora

Gift Object: artichokes

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to Guglielmo:

Illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor e consort mio carissimo.

Se Vostra eccellenza fusse rimasto sano in agosto, como io spero in dio, me sera un gran alegrezza. Vostra eccellenza sa che mi eli filio nostri stano tuto ben, dela gracia de dio. Vi manto a vostra eccellenza un poco di ardiziogi, poi che mi so che non si trova asai in quei barti, e prego vostra eccellenza chel voi goder per amor mio. Non so dir altro per adeso se non che mi recomanto a vostra eccellenza con tuto il core. Di mantova ai 8 di mazo.

di vostra eccellenza

amorevalissima consort che ve ama como se steso,

Leonora.

1569:

Date: 4 October 1569. ASM, AG, Busta 2143, Fascicolo II, p. 119.

Gift Recipient: the Emperor

Gift Sender: Eleonora

Gift Object: fruit

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to the Cavaliere Cavriani, at the imperial court in Vienna:

Leonora Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico Cavagliere nostro carissimo. Havessimo in questi dì la lettera vostra che ci scriveste da Ispruch et per essa vedemmo quanto havevate passato con le serenissime Prencipesse nostre sorelle, il che tutto ci è stato grato d'intender'. Dopo ci è capitata l'altra vostra di 14 del passato, che ci ragguaglia minutamente dell'arrivo vostro in corte et de complimenti fatti a nome nostro, non meno con la Cesarea Maestà nostro fratello

et signore che con la Maestà dell'Imperatrice et con la Reina di Polonia nostra sorella; onde, come il tutto ci è stato oltre modo caro di sapere, così grandamente lodiamo la diligenza usata da voi in tenerci così ben avisata di quei particolari che appunto ci dilettono, come è stato quello che ci scrivete del desiderio di Sua Maestà di haver di questi nostri frutti, massimamente de Lazaruoli [a kind of small apple, appreciated for their pretty colour], de quali, essendo come dovrebbe sapere passata la stagione, non possiamo di presente mandarne, ma ben fra dui giorni invieremo costi senza manco di que' frutti che potremo haver in questi tempi, et per conto de Lazaruoli voi farete nostre iscuze con sua Cesarea Maestà. Ci è piaciuto di mandarvi con questa nostra una lettera ch'il Principe nostro figliolo vi scrive dettata propriamente dallui, accioche vi rallegriate vedendo che tosto riuscirà un bravo segretario conche preghiamo Dio che vi conservi.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Di mantova il iiii d'ottobre 1569.

1571:

Date: 6 March 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.1, p. 93.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: not specified

Letter from Eleonora in Mantua to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico cavaliere nostro carissimo. Havendo Noi inteso che alle volte sono portati in cotesta città da vendere certa sorte de colombi stravaganti rispetto a nostri di qui, siamo entrate in gran desiderio d'haverne quattro o sei para di questi tali, ma che siano tutti variati in modo che un paro non sia come l'altro, et habbiamo pensato d'incaricar a voi questo particolarmente, sapendo Noi qual sia l'amorevolezza vostra et desiderio che tenete di farci cosa grata. Però starete avvertito che capitandone siano comperate subito con avvisarci il costo, posciache subito rimetteremo il denaro costi, et se per via di qualche amico vostro ne poteste havere un paro ò due che fossero più belli di quelli che ordinariamente sono portati da vendere, siate sicuro che oltre il pagamento riserveremo[?] ciò un grato piacere. Non mancarete per tanto, come confidiamo nella diligenza vostra, et attendete a conservarvi. Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Ci viene detto anco che capitano costi Anitre difforme et non simili alle nostre, et altri animali, però vorressimo che ci deste aviso che sorte d'animali vi vengono stravaganti, et il costo cosi di queste come delle Anitre, et cosi non mancarete. Di Mantova a VI di Marzo 1571.

Date: 13 March 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.1, pp. 99r-v.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: not specified

Letter from Eleonora in Mantua to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico cavaliere nostro carissimo. Si come havete corrisposto benissimo alla opinione che havevamo di voi, sapendo Noi quanto siate stato sempre pronto ne servigi nostri, cosi oltre modo commendiamo la diligenza che havete usata in trovar cosi tosto quegli animali che vi scrivemmo l'altr'hieri, et teniamo per fermo che saranno appunto conformi al gusto et desiderio nostro. Hor perche sappiate quanti ne haverete da incapparare, vi diciamo che vorressimo haver un paio d'ogni sorte di quelli che voi ci scrivete che si potranno cavar di presente, da que porchetti d'India in poi, che di questi non curiamo punto. Resta solo di trovar commodità di far che venghano in qua a salvamento, nel che non mancaremo di star vigilante per intender se verrà barca o del signor Duca [Guglielmo] nostro o d'altri che le potessero far il servizio di condurceli, nel qual caso mandaremo uno a posta a levargli. Frattanto starete ancor voi avvertito per sapere se si rappresentasse qualche buona occasione di potercegli inviare sicuramente, posciache quanto più tosto ci capiteranno, tanto maggiormente riceveremo ciò in piacer grato. Con questa occasione mandiamo il bando che hebbe il Malmegnatto et il fatto della cosa, affinche ne potiate parlar con sua serenità conforme a quello che vi scrivemmo a giorni andati, il qual Malmegnatto ha havuta buona pace da chi si spetta, però fate l'ufficio caldo come siamo certa che non mancarete, et il signore vi guardij.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Di Mantova i xiii di Marzo 1571.

Date: 3 April 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.1, p. 148.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: not specified

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico Cavaliere nostro carissimo. Quando Noi vi scrivemmo a giorni andati del negotio del Malmegnatto, fossimo prima certificata che cotesto havevano concesso a simili banditi salvicondotti per servirsi delle persone loro per servitio delle Galere, et offerendosi il Malmegnatto, che è buon soldato, di far anch'esso il medesimo, come crediamo di havervi scritto questo diffusamente, tenevamo per fermo che non fosse difficile ad ottener cosa che cotesti signori hanno concesso ad altri in casi simili, come anco voi ci scrivete che vi disse il Pren.o quando li parlassi di questo particolare, alla cui serenità si potrebbe far sapere che non haveressimo fatto ricercar cosa che non fosse anco stata concessa ad altri, massimamente offerendosi il Malmegnatto di venir' a servir personalmente sulle Galere di cotesta Serenissima Signoria, che forse per questo potrebbero que signori gratiarlo di quanto ricerca.

Venne l'altr'hieri costi una barca di sua eccellenza che condusse un Gentil huomo del signor Duca di savoya et, se non fosse partita per ritornar in qua, potreste valervene per mandarci quegli animaletti, de quali haverete buona cura acciò che ci venghino a salvamento, et Nostro Signore vi guardi.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Di Mantova i 3 d'Aprile 1571.

Date: 10 April 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.1, pp. 133r-v.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: not specified

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico Cavaliere nostro carissimo. Ci sono stati consignati gli Animali che ci havete inviati col ritorno della barca di sua eccellenza et, come sono riuscite conforme al gusto

nostro, così restiamo intieramente sodisfatte della diligenza et amorevolezza vostra, nota però a Noi per tante [?] che siamo certa che farete sempre ogni cosa che potrete a servizio nostro, sì come non [?] ancor Noi di giovarvi in ogni occasione che ci venga di poterle fare. Nel resto vi facciamo sapere come desideraremmo di havere un paio di Galine di Faraone, vedendo d'haverle a quel minor prezzo che si potrà perche in fatti sono un poco caretti a quindici scudi il paio. Nondimeno, quando non si possa di meno, li pigliarete et ce le manderete per la prima buona occasione che vi si rappresenterà, posciache subito vi rimborseremo il costo, sì come facciamo hora de gli Animaletti mandateci, di quali non habbiamo più bisogno per adesso, però di questi simili non ci invierete più altrimenti dalle Galline di Faraone in poi che queste staremo aspettando con desiderio. Quanto potete havere delle nuova di quelle galline et gran gallo da Polverara che fossero buoni da far covare et nascere pullicini grato ci sarebbe che ce ne mandaste, però ne farete pratica vedendo di farcene avere per ogni modo buon per [?] [?]. Quanto al negocio del Malmegnatto, hor che voi ci havete rivelato quel che costara et [?], vi diciamo che dobbiate metterlo in silentio, anzi se ve ne fosse parlato, cercate di sopirlo affinche non se ne tratti più, poiche Noi non ne vogliamo saper altro. Intanto conservatevi.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Di Mantova il x d'Aprile 1571.

Date: 23 April 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.1, p. 158.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: unspecified animals.

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico Cavaliere nostro carissimo.

Habbiamo veduto quel tanto che ci havete scritto per la lettera vostra di 14 del presente, in risposta di che ci occorre dirvi che desideriamo d'esser fatta chiara se potremo havere quelle Galline di Faraone che desideriamo, mettendo voi dubbio in ciò che possino esser state date via, perche quando fossimo certa di non doverle havere, ci rissolveressimo di inviar questi animaletti a chi gli havemo destinati, però non mancarete di chiarirci che

nel resto non vogliamo Tortore ne altro fuorché queste Galline se pur potremo ottenerle.
Nostro Signore vi guardi.
Leonora Duchessa di mantova.
Di Mantova i 23 d'Aprile 1571.

Date: 1 May 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.2, p. 168.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: not specified

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.
Magnifico Cavaliere nostro carissimo. Havete fatto bene a comperar quelle Galline di Faraone che ci scrivete haver tolte non ve ne essendo massimamente d'altre, che se bene il Gallo è zoppo come dite, pur che sia buono da far che si cavino nascenti, questo basterà et tanto maggiormente essendo bello come scrivete. Noi sappiamo che ne haverete buona custodia et però non vi diciamo che lo facciate, conoscendovi pur troppo diligente ne gli affari nostri, ma ben vi facciamo sapere che caro ci sarà di haver queste Galline al più tosto et però starete avvertito che venendovi occasione buona di poterle mandar in qua a salvamento, di farlo, posciache con desiderio le staremo attendendo. Conservatevi.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.
Di Mantova il primo di Maggio 1571.

Date: 22 May 1571. ASM, AG, Busta 2144, Fascicolo I.2, p. 183.

Gift Recipient: not specified

Gift Sender: not specified

Gift Object: doves and guinea hens

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to the Cavaliere Capilupi, Ambassador in Venice:

Leonora Archiduchessa di Austria, Duchessa di Mantova, Marchesa di Monferrato.

Magnifico Cavaliere nostro carissimo. Essendoci morto un paro di que Colombi che ci mandaste in questi di, che havevano sul becco et intorno a gli occhi cose che paiono creste et erano di color berettino, et un altro paro di quelli che sono tutti neri et hanno il capo bianco si come è anco la coda et sono de piu piccioli, Vogliamo che ne facciate comperare un paro di tutta due queste sorte si che li rinoviamo, et ce gli inviate insieme con le Galine di Faraone che ci dovete mandare, quali stiamo aspettando con desiderio, et però quanto più presto ci capitaranno et veranno a salvamento insieme con detti due para de colombi, tanto maggiormente havremo il tutto grato, per potergli inviare ove hanno da andare, et vi rimborseremo subito il costo.

Non habbiamo che dirvi in risposta della vostra di 19 del presente se non che facciate le nostre raccomandationi al Signore Ambasciatore Cesareo et a sua Consorte, ringratiandola della cagnolina, quale gionta che sia ci sara carissima. Iddio vi guardi.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Di Mantova i 22 di Maggio 1571.

1583:

Date: 14 January 1583. ASM, AG, Busta 2149, p. 667.

Gift Recipient: Margherita Gonzaga d'Este, daughter of Eleonora and wife of Alfonso II d'Este

Gift Sender: Eleonora

Gift Object: truffles

Letter from Eleonora in Mantova to Vincenzo Gonzaga in Ferrara:

Figliol mio carissimo.

El marcheso da patun [the Marquis of Poden] ha mandato un gendil homo giovan per dar in vostra servici per inparar la lingua idaliana e a cavalcar e altri virtu, e cosi vu prego che volete far questo apiaser a deto signor marches acioche lui resta sadisfata de voj, perche he ben fare de haver li amici per tuto. E con questo me recomanto di cuore e ve spera la vostra dornata con desideria di mantova a 14 di ganonari 1583.

Va manda deli dardufoli [truffles] dara ala vostra sorella da parta mia et fara mia racomadacion et basara la man al signor duca.

amorevolissima madre Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

1585:

Date: 24 April 1585 ASM, AG, Busta 2151, p. 27.

Gift Recipient: Eleonora

Gift Sender: Cardinal Gonzaga

Gift Object: fruit trees

Letter from Eleonora in Mantua to Gabriele Calzone, Castellan of Mantua:

Leonora per la gratia di Dio Archiduchessa d'Austria, Duchessa di Mantova et di Monferrato.

Magnifico nostro carissimo. Abbiamo con la vostra di 13 di questo ricevuto i sei cistoni con li frutti che ci havete mandati, inviati dal Signore Cardinale Gonzaga nostro Cugino, i quali ci sarebbe stato caro che fossero venuti meglio conditionati, non essendo sopra alcuni di essi nè frutto nè foglia. Della diligenza che havete usata in mandarceli vi commendiamo assai. Nostro Signor Dio vi conservi.

Leonora Duchessa di mantova.

Di Mantova a 24 d'Aprile 1585.

Section Three: Barbara

1566

Date: 17 August 1566 ASMo, Archivio Segreto Estense, Sezione Casa e Stato, Folder of letters from Alfonso to Barbara, unpaginated.

Gift Recipient: Alfonso

Gift Sender: Barbara

Gift Object: truffles

Letter from Alfonso in Trent to Barbara in Ferrara:

Serenissima Signora mia et Consorte osservandissima.

Essendo io gionto hiersera qua in Trento sano, per la Iddio gratia, insieme con tutta la mia compagnia, ove mi sono risoluto di fermarmi per hoggi, si per compiacere a Monsignor Illustrissimo Madrucci che me n'ha fatto grandissima istanza, come per dar tempo all'ultime Troppa de miei d'avanzarsi, che quasi havevo arrivata, non ho voluto lasciare di scrivere la presente a Vostra Altezza, prima per visitarla, come fo ben di cose, et anche per darle conto dello stato mio et del progresso del mio viaggio che, a Dio piacendo, partendomi domattina per tempo di qua anderò continuando, ne mancherò di darne raguaglio a Vostra Altezza di mano in mano, come mi sara caro al possibile ch'ella medesimamente mi tenga avisato ben spesso del buon stato di Lei, ch'io desidero sopra ogn'altra cosa. Et con questo baciandole le mani mi raccomando con tutto l'animo in sua buona gratia et prego il signor Dio che le doni il compimento de suoi desiderij. Di Trento alli xvii d'Agosto MDLxxvi.

Questa si e ritenuta fin qua in Pressenon ove sono arivato questa sera et vi ho ritrovato l'ultima truppa de miei, et affretterò piu o meno il mio arivare alle barche secondo l'aviso ch'io havrò di quello che havrano fatto i miei che sono inanzi, havendo per ciò espedito un corrier espresso ch'io espetto d'hora in hora. Ringratio poi di tutto l'animo Vostra Altezza dell'amorevole lettera sua et delle tartufole [truffles] che con essa mi ha mandata, che mi sono state gratissime, et la prego a far opera di conservarsi sana et star alegra con darmi spesso nova di lei della quale e amorevolissimo consorte et servitor Il Duca di Ferrara.

Date: 16 September 1566. ASF, MdP 2889, pp. 67 r+v.

Gift Recipient: Barbara

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: plums and pomegranates

Letter from Bernardo Canigiani in Ferrara to Francesco in Florence:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe.

Con la lettera del 6 del presente data al Poggio di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima ne era una per Monsignore Illustrissimo per conto del confine di Barga, che con questa ne fia la risposta, alla quale soggiugne Sua Santità Illustrissima che non ha nominato persona à Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima per non dar' cagione col nominare primo uno che un altro di suscitar' lite di precedenza, ma che sotto il nome generale di tutti i principi, come gl'ha scritto, intende particolarmente Savoia, Parma, Mantova et Urbino, et che quello che più piace all'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima debba mandar' un dei suoi consiglieri o auditori di ruota per 3□ in sul luogo, avanti comincino le nevj, et li 2 d'accordo terminino liberamente, et mi giura Sua Santità Illustrissima che non ne vuol manco per l'Illustrissima Eccellenza Vostra che per il duca suo nipote, sapendo anche che ella non vuole un'dito più di quello che è suo legittimamente, si come io le confermai. Et veramente credo che col'Cardinale haren' sempre il giusto con manco passione che col' duca. Sua Altezza [Barbara] resta nettissimo et il travaglio cotidiano non li dura fra freddo et caldo più che 2 hore o 3, onde spera esser' libera presto del tutto et non resta di offerirsi pronta al servitio dell'Eccellenze Vostre Illustrissime et raccomandarsi in buona gratia loro et della Serenissima sorella. Circa che (perche altra volta l'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima m'ha tentato se di costà io sò che sia qualcosa che non sia quà et le possa esser' grata) dico che, mandando il Duca mio signore quà all'havuta di questa, una soma di vino, com'io credo, ella, havendo o susine simiane o melagrane alafre, dolci et di grani grossi, può mandarne, che saranno gratissime, o anche susine asciutte in composta di zucchero come si fanno a Genova, che hieri ne mandavano cercando à furia. L'Arcivescovo di Sorriete di ritorno nuntio di Fiandra ci passò hieri, et se bene alloggiò con i frati del suo ordine in San Domenico, gli fu mandato il piatto dal Cardinale et fatto trattenere da vescovi et prelatj honorevolmente. Quà passano di ritorno moltj dei fanti del Signor Aurelio, et non le dico se costoro ampliono et magnificano la cosa intanto che dicono essersi sbandati quasi tutti, del che, se l'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima ha certezza alcuna in contrario, io la suplico che mene dica qualcosa da metter' à rincontro in sul'libro del mio cuor à quella bella mostra che ha fatto alle dame il signor Duca di Ferrara in Vienna, che in vero sarà apparita

benissimo ma al combattere sarà minor' cosa assaj, et quà cominciono i padri et i fratelli et le moglie à esser ricerchi di mandar' danari, et non siamo à fatica à un mese, ne ci è restato molto à che por'mano, havendo insino don Alfonso venduto la sua bella possessione di Confortino; si che, se la cosa ha à durar', io presento grandissime strida et disordinj. Gli editti pontificali si vanno exequendo, et il Vescovo Rossetto m'ha fatto scusa che ha havuto à tirar' giù l'arca del Signor Lorenzo Salviati Zio del Duca mio signore, l'ossa del quale ha poste a basso in deposito con quelle del Cardinale. Così si è proibito il passeggiar' per chiesa, ove si stà hora a seder' un'huomo et una donna dove le so' belle et giovanj, et sen'andrà osservando insino al ritorno del Signor Duca, che ha caro di ber' un poco più grosso che non fà il Cardinale in queste cose et anche Sua Altezza, et in vero che Monsignor Illustrissimo ne fa meco di gran querele, et à questi signori di gran' rabbuffi, si che il Cardinale da Este e'l Signor don Francesco non stanno adesso molto in Ferrara, et non gli bazzicano troppo à torno. Il Signor Duca di Mantova si dice che per conto di quel vescovado ha irritato molto Sua Santità, onde è stato citato à Roma et il Cardinale m'ha detto che vuol'ire a visitare Sua Eccellenza et Sua Altezza sino à Mantova, dove andrò forse anch'io, havendomi Sua Santità Illustrissima per vedermi così volentieri et discorrer' meco quasi in luogo di suo consigliere o segretario et invitandomi molto spesso all'esser' insieme, dove egli parla con tanta affectione del Duca mio signore che io li sò molto servidor' di buon cuor, oltr'all'obbligo del comandamento di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, alla quale con la debita Reverenza bacio la mano et prego da dio ogni maggior' prosperità et contentezza.

Di Ferrara il dì 16 di Settembre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servo,
Bernardo Canigiani.

Date: 25 September 1566. ASF, MdP 2889, p. 55.

Gift Recipient: Barbara

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: plums and pomegranates

Letter from Bernardo Canigiani in Ferrara to Francesco in Florence:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe.

Io non havevo chiesto all'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima le susine simiane come dir' da parte della duchessa [Barbara], ne perche io mi fussi seco vantato o obbligato à niente,

Ma dovendo venir' per altro quì il vetturale apportatore della presente, et havendomi altra volta tentato l'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima di quel che gli potesse esser grato di costà, mi sovvennero le melagrane alafre et le susine simiane come frutte da malatj, et l'aggiunta di quelle susine di Genova vi feci perche il suo scalco x di sono ne cercava con grande istanza. Si che non habbia l'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima scrupolo o rimordimento del non haver' potuto mandarle. Sua Altezza, con il restare tal'volta nettissima di quella sua febbicina, l'ha finalmente, con la solita maninconia, ridotta a dei 3 di l'uno 1 in quartana et li 2 di non sospettj. Stà il doppio desinare levata et si lascia goder' et visitar' da ognuno che vuole, dei quali hieri io fui uno, per parte dell'Eccellenze Vostre Illustrissime, à le quali ella bacia le manj, ringratiandole dei i ricordi contra il dispiacere della visita et d'ogni altra lor' buona volontà et amorevolezza per me offertale. Il Cardinale non ha poi havut'altro che quella febbre, et hieri mandò a Bologna à incontrar' Farnese et accompagnarlo verso Parma per tutto questo stato, aspettando di corto quì anche il Reverendissimo Delfino. Et altro non so che dirmi à Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, alla quale con la debita reverenza baciando la mano prego da Dio somma felicità et contentezza. Di Ferrara il di 25 di Settembre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima devotissimo servo,
Bernardo Canigiani.

Date: 30 September 1566. ASF, MdP 2889, p. 53.

Gift Recipient: Barbara

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: plums

Letter from Bernardo Canigiani in Ferrara to Francesco in Florence:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe.

Dopo ch'io ho ricevuto da Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima la sua lettera del 21 data al poggio, molto cortese verso di me per gli advertimenti et commendationi datemj, Io le ho inviato duoi seugini Franzesi per la caccia, Et da lei, indirettemj da messer Antonio, ho havuto per staffetta 42 susine simiane molto fresche et benissimo condotte per Sua Altezza [Barbara], alla quale le portai subito, cio è Sabato, et furono lodate et gradite à meraviglia, se bene in quello stante à punto gli cominciava à venir' la febbre et fargli freddo, essendo il dì et l'hora sua. Non ostante la quale, ella uscì hieri sino in duomo à tenere una fanciulla hebrea à battesimo, et molto si offerisce et bacia la mano

all'Eccellenze Vostre Illustrissime, lodandomi ancora le belle susine, delle quali ella fece parte al Cardinale, che non si leva quasi punto da diacere. Dal campo Cesareo viene ogni dì lettere, di mano in mano che l'Imperatore piglia tutte le buone et utili deliberationj per l'importanza della guerra proposte in consiglio dal Signor Duca di Ferrara, la compagnia del quale è tutta sana et manda quà ai suoi à chiedere danari ciascuno in particular'. Il Zerbinatto, huomo del Cardinale da Este, s'avvia stamani in Francia, dice per suo bisogno et capriccio proprio, ma io credo mandato dal'padrone, et il signor Don Francesco si prepara egli ancora per à quella volta. Con che solo, facendo humilmente Riverenza all'Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima, le bacio la mano et prego da dio somma felicità et contento. Di Ferrara il dì 30 di Settembre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima devotissimo servo,
Bernardo Canigiani.

Date: 16 October 1566. ASF, MdP 2889, p. 49.

Gift Recipient: Barbara

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: plums and pomegranates

Letter from Bernardo Canigiani to Francesco in Florence:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe.

Son comparse le 25 melagrane, che 2 o 3 hanno patito, et la scatola delle susine confette benissimo conditionate, che domattina le presenterò à Sua Altezza [Barbara], la quale visitai col' Cardinale hiersera nel'colmo della febbre che non è molta, et tengo commessione tante volte quante io scrivo ai miei signori di raccomandarla, offerirla et salutar' tutti à suo nome. Il Cardinale Farnese arrivò hiersera à 23 hore per barca, come si partirà ancora domattina per alla volta di Ravenna et di Roma, et ci si aspetta Commendone, con che reverentemente bacio la mano di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima pregando Dio per la sua felicità et contentezza. Di Ferrara il dì 16 di Ottobre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servo,
Bernardo Canigiani.

Date: 21 October 1566. ASF, MdP 2889, p. 47.

Gift Recipient: Barbara

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: plums and pomegranates

Letter from Bernardo Canigiani in Ferrara to Francesco in Florence:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe.

Dal campo Cesareo, dove sò molti malatj nella compagnia del signor Duca, non si hà altro senon che Sua Eccellenza ci sarà presto, senza havere alcuno dei suoi visto pur' uno de i nemicj et non con molta sua soddisfazione. Dicesi che verrà seco uno dei Principi di Baviera per donde ei passerà à posta et monsignor di Ghisa. Fece Sua Eccellenza quel' bel' banchetto qui molto predicato et celebrato, dove Cola Abruzzese suo lottatore si provò con uno spagnuolo del Serenissimo Arciduca Ferdinando per spatio d'un' hora et nessuno andò in terra. Di poi si offerse un' Unghero di gran' vita di provarsi seco, et con poco contrasto lo battè in terra con la pancia all' in giù et pestollo et malmenollo stranamente con grandissimo suo scorno et dispiacere. Sua Altezza [Barbara] scema le febbri in quantità ma non in numero, che l' hà ogni dì, et ringratia assaj l' Eccellenza Vostra Illustrissima delle mirabolane [plums] di Genova (che n' hà mandate sino in Aspruch) et delle melagrane [pomegranates], delle quali alcune alafre furono quà cosa nuova et molto grate, offerendosi ella sempre in buona gratia della serenissima sorella et dell' Eccellenze Vostre Illustrissime alle quali desidera servire. Il Cardinale stà benissimo, col' quale hiermattina caminaj più d' un miglio, et quel' dà Este ha un poco di gotta ma stà in campagna sempre. Poi che ci passò Farnese si ha per maritata madama lucrezia nel principe d' Urbino, non però che nessuno delli 2 Cardinali sene sia o qui o altrove lasciat' intendere, et dicesi che Ferrara hà promesso con giuramento tutti i voti suoi et Franzesi nella prima sedia vacante à Farnese, perche è dia costei à quel nipote. Di Spagna hà il Cardinale la malattia del Re con 2 terzane, ma con miglioramento dopo l' essersi tratto sangue, et insieme la malattia dei serenissimi figli di Cesare con pericolo della vita dell' uno, et la morte del Cavaliere Ardinghello. Ne è senza gelosia Sua Santità Illustrissima (per la sperienza di Francia) che tali accidenti possino esser di seme de i frutti di Fiandra. Di Parma (per quanto disse Farnese) ci può essere à ogn' hora il parto della principessa, talche Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima puo armarsi à mandar là à dare il buon' prò, et qui à rallegrarsi del' esser tornato il duca sano, et forse delle nozze della sorella, che à tutte l' hore può seguir' ogni cosa, et dio il voglia. Con che reverentemente bacio la mano di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima pregandole da Sua Maestà somma prosperità et contentezza. Di Ferrara il dì 21 d' Ottobre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servo,
Bernardo Canigiani.

Date: 4 December 1566. ASF, MdP, 2889, p. 19.

Gift Recipient: Barbara

Gift Sender: Francesco

Gift Object: plums

Letter from Bernardo Canigiani in Ferrara to Francesco in Florence:

Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signor Principe.

Perche le nuoue di questo cortile sogliono capitare subito costà, come dice vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima à uso del paese, sendosi detto che il duca stava malissimo, le dico che gli stà bene et ci si aspetta con quel di Ghisa per il manco fra 12 giorni, come che molti dei suoi gentilhomini qui et per lo stato sien'morti et vadin'morendo tutta via, il che forse la intenderà dal signor Aniballe Bentivoglio che parte domani per venir'a biciar' la mano a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, o come forse le ha detto il signor Agnolo Cesis, che è stato accarezzato et castrato à giuoco assai bene da questi signori. La signora Duchessa [Barbara] si stava hier' l'altro assai bene, però con la febbre, et con una modestia infinita mi domandò di quelle susine [plums] di Genova, delle quali io trovai circa 50 da certi lucchesi miei amicj, che ne mandò la maggior' parte alla regina Margherita subito, tenendo il resto per sè con gradirle à maraviglia tutto per adviso. Alle 2 hore poi gli prese nuova febbre sendovi il Cardinale che mene dette ragguaglio; però hieri non hebbe che una al solito et dà x di in quà suda assaj, ne altro sò che mi glene dire. Il Cardinale hormai differirà la sua partita verso la fine del'verno, però farà forse più capitale dell'amorevole hospitio dell'Eccellenze Vostre Illustrissime et dell'invito loro che e'non credeva far' se egli partiva in principio del'verno. Ancora passano delle genti di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima se bene non sò altro del'commissario Ferrino, et quì è Monsignor di Fossombrone e il Cavaliere suo nipote, con che bacio reverentemente la mano a Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima, pregando Dio per la sua prosperità et contentezza. Di Ferrara il di 4 di Dicembre 1566.

Di Vostra Eccellenza Illustrissima humilissimo servo,
Bernardo Canigiani.

1567:

Date: 14 February 1567. ASM, AG, Busta 1212, Fascicolo dated 1567, p. 291.

Gift Sender: Barbara

Gift Recipient: Guglielmo Gonzaga

Gift Object: fish

Letter from Barbara in Ferrara to Eleonora in Mantova:

Serenissima signora sorella honorandissima.

Havendomi detto il Mirolo mio scalco che egli havea inteso dal Conegrani che fu qua a di passati che il Signor Duca era desideroso di haver de cevali in aceto et di qualche altra sorte di pesce salato da Comacchio, per il desiderio che e in me di mostrar in ogni occasione la buona volonta mia a Sua Eccellenza, ho fatto torre questi pochi cevali et alcuni miglioramenti della provisione che si era fatta per casa et li mando all'Altezza Vostra, acciò che ella si contenti d'inviarli a Casale come ben mi confido che sara per far, quanto prima escusandomi se sono pochi, per che, havendo quelle Valli reso malissimo questo anno, si è anche trovata cosi debole la provisione solita a farsi qua che non si ha potuto per questa volta far di vantaggio, et io ho voluto piu tosto farlene questa poca parte, presupponendo che sua Eccellenza sia per accettarla insieme col buono animo mio che lasciare di compiacerla perquanto e stato possibile, et con raccomandarmi di tutto core alla buona grazia di Vostra Altezza, Le bacio le mani et prego il Signor Dio per ogni sua prosperita. Di Ferrara A xiiii di Febraio MDLXVII.

Di Vostra Altezza

Amorevolissima Sorella,

Barbara duchessa di Ferrara.

Dress and Textiles Glossary

This glossary has been compiled using the glossaries provided in Orsi Landini, Roberta, and Bruna Niccoli, *Moda a Firenze 1540-1580: lo stile di Eleonora di Toledo e la sua influenza* (Florence: Polistampa, 2005); and Elizabeth Currie, 'The Fashions of the Florentine Court: Wearing, Buying and Making Clothes, 1560-1620' (University of Sussex, 2004).

Astone/i: decorative band applied to the garments, frequently embroidered.

Baragoni: decorative puffs in the upper part of the sleeve.

Bigio: grey colour.

Broccato: brocade, a precious fabric, generally silk, with a design produced by an extra weft thread, often gold or silver, inserted only in the area of the design.

Brodone: decoration sewn around the top of the sleeve in order to conceal the join.

Buratto: gauze-weave fabric, the more precious varieties were made using silk, gold and silver thread. They could be patterned using brocade wefts and bouclé effects.

Calzoni: breeches.

Cangio/cangiante: 'changeable', used to describe textiles which change colour depending on the light.

Canottiglio/canutiglia: purle: gold or silver wire, wrapped around a needle to create a coil, then cut into individual twists and used in embroidery to create relief effects.

Cappa: circular or semicircular cape, sometimes with a hood.

Cappotto: short semicircular cloak, with sleeves which were often not used.

Chermisi/cremisi: crimson, the most precious shade of red, made from the kermes insect, of Oriental origin.

Coda: train.

Colombino/colonbino: dove-grey colour.

Costure: seams.

Damasco: damask: a patterned fabric where the design is produced by reversing the weave.

Dobretto: a thick cloth made of linen and cotton with a raised stripe.

Ermellino: ermine.

Ermesino/ermisino/ormesino: a light taffeta.

Faldiglia: farthingale: an underskirt stiffened using hoops designed to hold out the skirts.

Ferraiolo: short circular or semicircular cloak, with collar.

Ferrandina: a light cloth made of low-quality silk.

Filaticcio: floss-silk.

Gamurra/gamurrino: dress which combines gown and petticoat, used as informal garb or by servants/children.

Giubbone: doublet, garment of male origin which covers the chest; it had tight sleeves, a central front opening and a standing collar.

Giuggiolino: amber-brown colour.

Grossagrana: grosgrain, a heavy cloth generally made of silk, often with a raised stripe.

Incarnato/incarnatino: pinkish-red colour.

Manteo: long cloak with collar and decorative fastenings.

Mavì: mauve colour.

Mostra: a lining, often of a different colour from the rest of the garment.

Mucaiarro/mucaiaro: fabric of Middle-Eastern origin, frequently striped, made using floss-silk or bourette.

Oro/argento tirato: gold/silver wire.

Oro/argento filato: filé gold/silver, made by wrapping a very fine sheet of metal around a silk core.

Oro/argento riccio: gold/silver loops: bouclé effects produced by raising the metallic weft in certain areas to create small loops.

Orsoio: a silk organza.

Pagonazzo: purple colour.

Passamano: braid or ribbon.

Pelo: nap/pile. Silk yarn used to create decorative effects in weaving.

Perpignano: woollen jersey cloth.

Pianelle: footwear without heels and with a wedge sole of varying height.

Pistagna: pickadil: decorative strip of cloth, generally edged with tabs or scallops, used to cover hems on collars, cuffs, waists etc.

Rascia: high-quality wool twill, especially used for mourning.

Raso: satin.

Riscontri: frogging (a kind of decorative fastening).

Roba: overgown, with short or long sleeves.

Rovescio: wool cloth with a long nap (see *pelo*).

Saia: wool cloth.

Saia lucchesina: a kind of silk.

Saio: male tunic-type garment, which covers the figure as far as the thighs.

Spinetta: a ribbon or cord, plaited in a herringbone pattern.

Tabi: heavy taffeta.

Taffeta: taffeta.

Tane: brown colour.

Tela sangallo: probably linen.

Teletta: silver or gold tabby: taffeta with an extra weft thread of gold or silver, either covering the entire fabric, or used to form designs.

Tocca: a fine silk cloth, often woven with gold or silver threads.

Turchino: turquoise colour.

Vaio: squirrel fur.

Velluto: velvet.

Velluto alto e basso: velvet with pile cut to different lengths.

Velluto a opera: figured or patterned velvet.

Vergola: silk braid.

Veste: gown: the main garment, with decorative sleeves, under which a petticoat or a skirt and narrow sleeves were always worn.

Zimarra: long, loose overgown, without waist seam.